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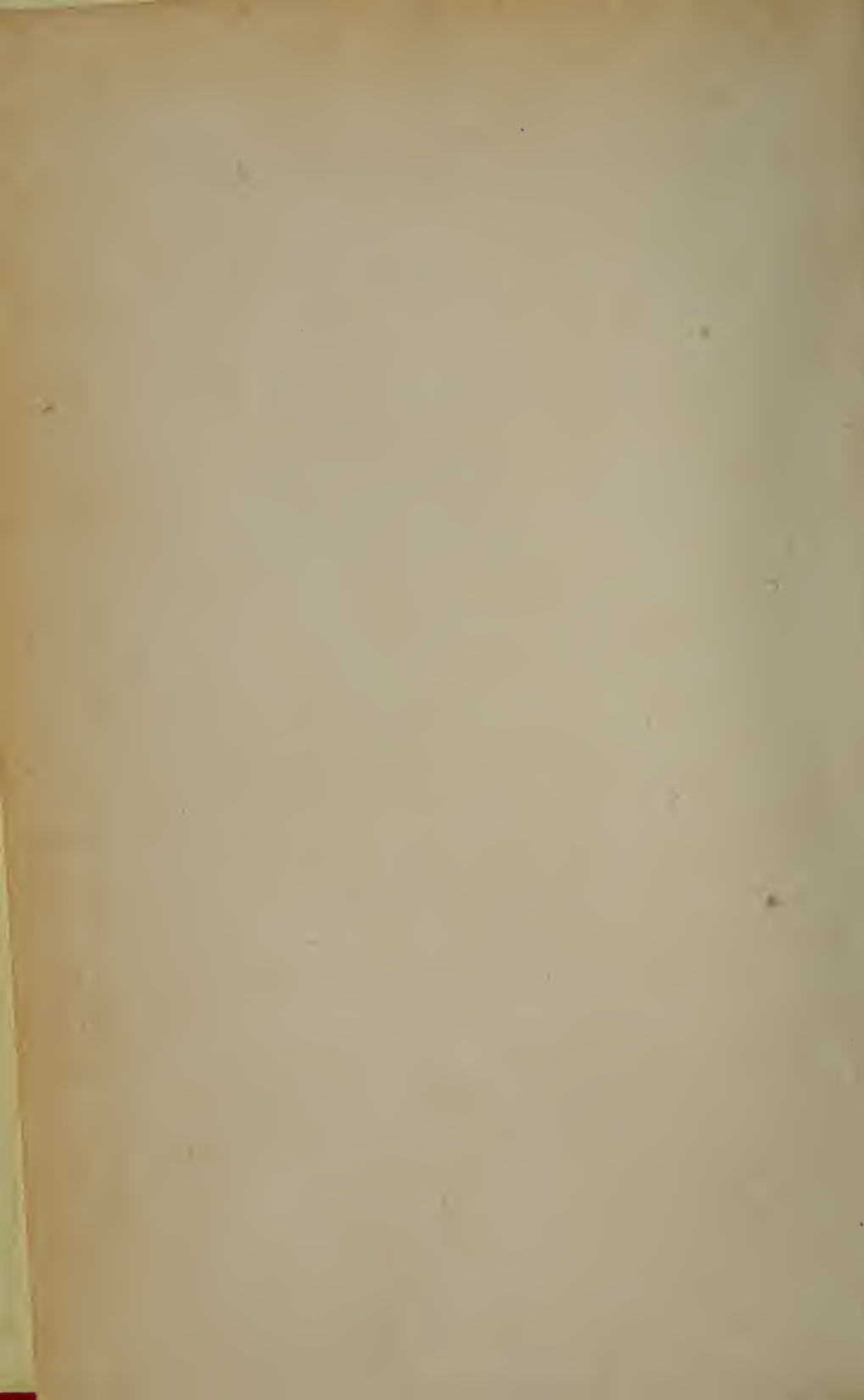
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# AUTUMN MANŒUVRES.

BY

MRS. M. MOORE.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

VOL. II.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

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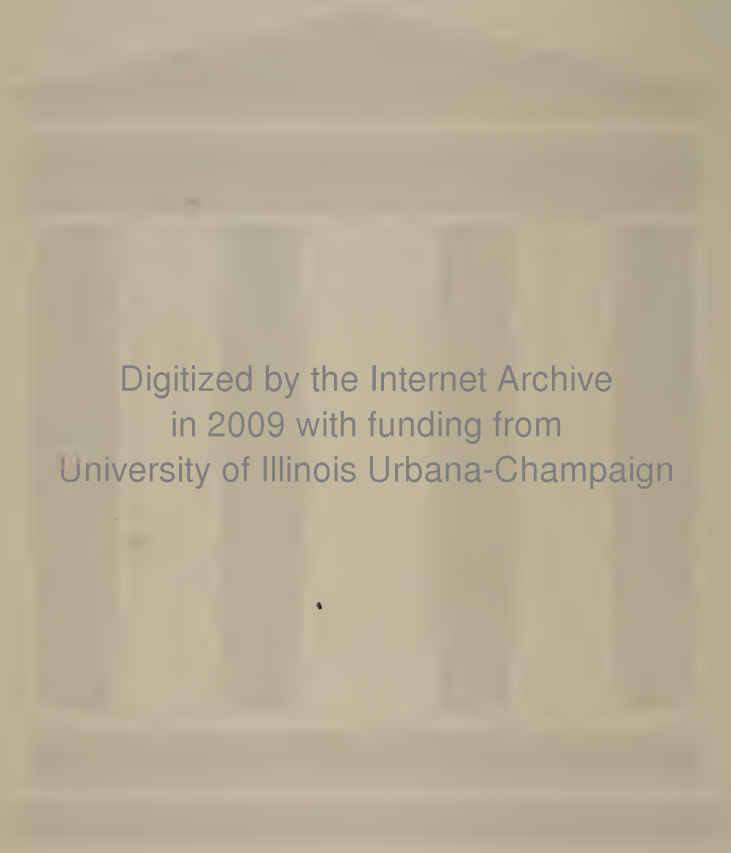
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# AUTUMN MANŒUVRES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### GINGERBREAD AND PHILOSOPHY.

“So, Reilly, you are sure it is possible to remove Vin without a chance of injury?” It was a judicious inquiry.

The doctor smiled. “It might have been ‘possible’ last week,” he said.

Then Bathurst coughed. “I consider you have been most kind and unselfish, Reilly, in this matter. I feel that you have exceeded your duty a hundredfold.”

The doctor bowed. “Thank you,” he said, with his happy smile. “It has been a pleasant time to me, notwithstanding the

accident that has put us all out of our reckoning."

"That is so," acquiesced Bathurst. "I remember your telling me you were due at Windermere this week."

"I shall have to wait until next, to see Seymour safe on his legs, and then I must be off to the old folks at home."

"Can't you postpone the visit for a while?"

Reilly looked a reflective negation, and the colonel went on—

"Neville starts for Madras to-day. I don't think Vivian regrets his detention in the least. Although the boy is as brave as any honest man need be, he was not meant for a soldier. I am sorry you have to go and leave the mystery unriddled."

"I will leave it as a legacy to you."

"I'm not capable of dealing with it, you know that. Yet—I am deeply interested—h'm—as a philanthropist."

"Of course ; certainly," agreed Reilly,

quickly. He felt that his own interest could also be justified by philanthropy.

“Don’t forget me at Netherby. Come and see me if you can. I ask you as a personal favour, not as a mere compliment—nor even as a friend’s friend.”

“Yet there is a very tender aroma about an old friendship,” laughed Reilly. Then, with a thoroughly earnest ring in his voice, “Thank you, colonel. I shall *not* forget.”

Then they talked of other things, each carefully avoiding anything but a passing allusion to the ladies.

Bathurst was rather doubtful about Reilly. He was prepared to believe that this astute young doctor had himself a vivid interest in some one at the Glade ; but he also knew he would be quite capable of concealing his feelings. The colonel was sensible of an unreasoning desire to know for which of the ladies such preference might be. “Though there’s no chance for either of us—past,

present, or to come—that I can see. We are in a fog.”

He had begun to realize a dismal prospect in this disassociation from the Glade. The fact was, they were quite on a familiar footing now. Mrs. Elmore had become not only accustomed to receive him as her guest, but to look forward to the light of his society.

This morning the rain fell heavily; yet Bathurst did not omit to pay his matitudinal visit to his nephew. His attentions were amazingly consistent, too; his invention never wearied in producing some excuse for sending those delicate trifles in the way of flowers, books, and music, or a bottle of rare wine that was to accomplish wonders in giving strength and tone to Mrs. Elmore.

On this occasion he went first to the dining-room, where the ladies spent the morning, now that the morning-rooms were occupied by Doctor Reilly and Vivian.

Mary was there, busy as usual; but she



did not retire immediately after he entered the room, as she had always uniformly done.

"I was tempted to stay in the hall and listen to Gounod," he said, "but I feared discovery, and I equally feared to approach the song-bird's cage."

"You would not have frightened the bird," laughed Adelaide.

"No; but I should have frightened Mrs. Elmore. She would have asked me if I had forgotten which was the patient."

"No one could ever mistake Kate for a 'patient.' In such weather as this, nothing but her music will keep her quiet."

"That is my sister's idea of quiet," observed Mary, as the distant strains of "Faust" reached them.

Bathurst did not betray any surprise, although he was positive this very retiring young lady had never before honoured him with a remark that had not been extracted. He took up her jesting remark as playfully,

and from time to time she joined in the conversation quite naturally.

The pleasant half-hour was nearly over when Reilly came in. "Are you ever coming to us, colonel?" he said. "Good morning, Mrs. Elmore. I haven't seen you yet—have I? The colonel's attentions are unequal, and we feel it."

Mrs. Elmore shook her head. "I suppose it must be my fault," she said. "How can I make amends?"

"By going with me to see Vivian," said Bathurst. "No doubt he is feeling your neglect more than mine."

And so it happened that Mrs. Elmore hardly cared to refuse, or had no wish to refuse, and Mary and Reilly were left alone once more.

He had already received one glance and a distant bow, but somehow he was not satisfied. She had shaken hands with him yesterday morning. The simple conventionality of shaking hands seemed to bring them together.

“I don’t think I shall take my five miles this morning. Would you advise it?”

“It is not my province to advise,” she said. “That is in yours.”

“Oh, I advise other people. But I want other people to advise me.”

“Well, then, the question is—can you do anything better than go out?”

“Well, I think I can. But that all depends on you. As you know, the mind requires recreation as well as the body. And having bored Seymour for several mortal hours, I think I deserve a little diversion—don’t you?”

“So you think it would be a diversion to bore me for another hour?” Mary said, with a little smile.

She was certainly more natural this morning. He had passed the barrier of ice, he was sure of it.

“Well, since you have no resource, I won’t be so unmerciful as to drive you out into the rain. However, you will hinder all

my work, and put out my calculations for the day."

"Now you take all the guilt off the gingerbread," said Reilly, dejectedly.

"What is gingerbread?"

"Oh, it's a beastly compound! I hardly know whether it's sold now. I hope it's a relic of barbarism. Did you ever hear of a country fair?"

Reilly was watching her with strong interest. The impassive expression had faded, and the intelligence of the face was allowed some play. Perhaps she had forgotten her "part."

She nodded. "Yes, in the 'Vicar of Wakefield.'"

"Well, this bread was sold at fairs, made up into cake, and highly decorated with flimsy tinsel, just as a bride's cake is in the present day—except, you know, that's all white."

"I don't know."

"That is of little consequence. I can't

tell you the origin of the bride's cake—I'm next to certain, by the way, that she never eats it; therefore the custom of providing one appears to be ridiculous."

"I don't think Shakespeare mentions it; nor, indeed, do I remember coming across a classical allusion on the subject," observed Mary, reflectively.

"Perhaps it is one of the happy results of modern civilization, which frequently insists upon an utterly useless, or even harmful, thing as a dire necessity. Sweets, however, seem to have been regarded as the appropriate foods for newly married pairs. Our ancestors were compelled by the iron law of custom to decoctions of honey for a stated period after their wedding; but it seems rather overdoing the thing to add 'sweets to the sweet.' The mixture—if mixture it can be called—is inartistic. A little vinegar would be more judicious, as tending to correct a tendency to fermentation."

"I see, you can't help regarding *all* things



in a professional light," she said, a sort of careless indifference in her voice, and a certain meaning in the steady depths of the eyes raised to his.

"Yes," he answered, pleasantly. "Don't you hold that a man's heart should be in his work?"

Even as he spoke he remembered how pertinaciously he had striven to gain some intimacy with this girl, whose conduct was still enigmatical to him.

"Most certainly. But we have wandered somewhat from the point," she said. "However, judging from the vaguest outlines, I should be inclined to think that the exterior of the gingerbread was preferable to the interior."

"No doubt. Although it was all bad enough!"

"Exactly. Now I think I have caught the exact meaning of the application."

"Oh, that is cruelly sarcastic! I only meant to say you had made a most gracious

condescension, but had detracted from your own merit by allowing me to see that it was a sacrifice."

"You are right," she said, with a dash of bitterness in her low voice. "I was abominably rude."

"I will not allow you to say so! All that, and much more, is permissible in familiar dialogue."

"But I had no such excuse," she said, a trifle stiffly. "I was not jesting."

"I don't want you to find an excuse. I am quite content, whether you jest with me or reprove me."

Reilly spoke with more earnestness than the occasion demanded, and Mary was silent after this speech.

"I'm quite satisfied," he continued, "we're getting through the wet morning delightfully. May I look at that parcel of books which has just arrived?"

He had noticed her eyes wander lovingly from him to them, and hoped to engage her interest.

“By all means,” she said.

Reilly picked up the packet a servant had just delivered, and brought it to the table. While he did so he saw the names of Spinoza and Charles Reade, of Victor Hugo and Darwin, of Goethe, and an odd volume of old plays.

These girls were not so far out of the world as he had thought.

“I’ll help you through these,” he said, “if I may. Which is your choice?”

“I take Darwin and Spinoza; Dell, Hugo and Goethe; and Kate revels in the most modern and the most ancient. She likes nothing else. But,” continued Mary, in surprise, “haven’t you read all this?”

“I? No. I have not had time——”

“No, no! I forget that we have nothing else to do with our time.”

“I fear I am a bad reader. If I differ from an author, I lose patience with him.”

“And then defects become more con-



spicuous. There is, perhaps, no author, any more than any person, who is void of faults. But any one is welcome to them; *I* am satisfied with the beauties."

"You make me envious. I have a strong leaning to philosophic study, but have been deterred from reading. I will tell you frankly why — because I positively feared the effect these various conditions of thought might cause. It has been part of my training to reconcile conditions, to make seeming contradictions agree, to disassociate the false from the true. My own tendencies, you see, stood in my way."

"I don't quite see that," she said, meditatively.

"Do you not? Could I hope to bring about an accordance of all the schools of philosophy? I have always deemed it a matter of regret that the higher minds do not agree on points of abstract thought."

Mary turned her beautiful intelligent eyes full on him, and said, with a weight

of expressive emphasis, "I think they *do* agree."

There was silence after this startling speech. Then she went on with a hesitating modesty that gave her words more weight—

"Men have only a different capacity for accepting truth, and a different mode of demonstrating it. All forms of thought are true. Truth is in everything. The nature of things is in its essence true. It is impossible to escape truth. The grossest superstition possesses its atom of truth. It underlies even evil itself. Truth *is*."

The meaning in her grave sweet face, above all the flash in those quiet eyes, carried him quite out of himself, and gave a deeper significance than even the low expressive words themselves.

"Nothing will deter me from the study of philosophy, for the future," he said. While as he spoke he thought—

"Where is any author in the world  
Teaches such beauty as a woman's eye?"

Reilly's senses became very agreeably confused. This theory Mary had just expounded seemed the most natural truth in the world. Who would think to receive a shock in the very foundation of one's ideas from a mere girl, an inexperienced girl, shut out from the contemplation of life, save through the medium of books? Who could tell but that woman might be created to answer the enigmas of life as well as to form one?

"To most minds," he said, "it is only possible to recognize truth by one light. You seem to have the gift to see it under any aspect."

"Please change the subject," she said, hurriedly. "Here comes mamma; she doesn't like it."

And Reilly took the hint obediently. It was pleasant indeed to see the strong attachment, the loving respect, this family bore to each other.

"Would Mrs. Elmore object if we returned to the subject of pastry?" he asked

in an undertone, as that lady entered the room.

“That, I fear, we should find very indigestible,” said Mary, sweetly.

“By Jove! She has some sense of humour, too,” thought Reilly; and he experienced a thrill of disappointment on seeing her gather up the books and leave the room.

“I hope we have derived mutual benefit from the change of scene,” said he, cheerfully. “I shirked my walk this morning, you see.”

“Don’t go yet!” she said, appealingly. “I have not had an opinion about my daughter.”

“Surely we ought to know that our anxiety was ill-founded. Her reserve was evidently only the result of her singular training upon her exceptional intellect. There is no fault to be found with your daughter, but that she is too clever to be readily understood.”

“Then, Doctor Reilly, don’t you think—

tell me candidly—don't you think it would be wise on my part to prevent her—oh, you cannot think how anxious I am to do right!—to prevent her from developing that intellect?"

He listened to her earnest, halting speech most patiently, then shook his head gravely. "It is too late," he said, "after allowing your daughters an indiscriminate choice of literature, to talk of curbing their natural intelligence."

Mrs. Elmore's face flushed as she answered with excitement, "*That* matter has not been one of my least difficulties. I assure you I kept them, only by the most scrupulous care, from everything but history and the Bible. Oh, consider, doctor! Look at the bare facts of history shorn of all description. And then, when their minds craved for food, I gave them Shakespeare. Then Dell bought a newspaper at a remote railway station. After that they acquired a taste for contemporary literature."

“I don’t think you had need to hesitate, after Shakespeare and the Bible,” said Reilly, encouragingly.

“I considered the matter carefully, and arrived at that conclusion,” continued she, solemnly. “And now it comes to this—that they know more, much more, than I do on every subject under the sun ; and only by their *love* to me can I influence them at all !”

“The only influence worth a rap,” said Reilly, energetically.

“At first I dreaded the effects of their liberty. There was such an insatiable demand for poetry that I trembled. You know the halo of romance surrounding the poetry of love ; and what poetry does not teem with the subject ? Even Kate’s songs are nearly all love-songs,” she added, mournfully.

“All I can say in defence of the subject is to remind you of an old saying—

“’Tis love that makes the world go round.”



## CHAPTER II.

“OUR PREFERENCES WON’T HURT US.’

It was an undeniable fact that the ladies at the Glade were somewhat dull after the invalid had been removed. The excitement was over, and it was but natural a reaction should set in. Yet, singularly, no allusion had been made by any one, until Adelaide one evening, after the lamp had been lighted and the family sat down together to pass the quiet hours in rational recreation, made a sudden irrelevant remark.

“There seems to me to be a want in the house now Mr. Seymour has gone. It’s a fact, mamma, that I was really sorry to part with him.”

Mrs. Elmore did not reply at once. Perhaps that was excusable, because she was occupied with her needlework, and it appeared to give her some trouble at the moment.

“Don’t you think this augurs well for my future success?” continued Adelaide, drawing up her chair to the table.

“I am afraid, Dell, you will not find every patient as interesting as Mr. Seymour,” said her mother, guardedly.

“I refuse to be depressed! Doctor Reilly gave me every encouragement.”

“Oh, how I hope Colonel Bathurst will come in now and then!” broke out Kate, looking up from her lacework.

“My dear child,” said Mrs. Elmore, with some indignation at the suggestion, “he will certainly not do so; he has, fortunately, now no cause.”

“Then I will give him cause. I will ask him to come and see me.”

“Kate!”



"Is it worse to express our feelings than to have them? I doubt it. Oh, Mary, you're looking a terrible affirmative! Well, in my humble opinion men are delightful! I'm sure I am quite fond of the colonel. I wish he was my uncle. Haven't we any uncles, mamma? They might form an interesting change in the monotony of our lives. Then, too, I really admired that grave, self-contained young doctor mamma was so confidential with. Even the ridiculous old major was amusing—sometimes."

"I think that qualifying 'sometimes' was necessary," laughed Adelaide. "I always found him in the way."

"He never troubled *me* but once," remarked Mary, severely.

"You would never let any one trouble you, dear, if you did not desire it," said Kate, wickedly. "Now, I am honest, I admit that I am not troubled—by Colonel Bathurst."

"You *are* honest, Kate," said Mary, lazily,

“but hardly honest enough to state the whole truth.”

“I must admit that I *wish* Kate would talk less lightly upon some subjects,” said Mrs. Elmore, emphatically and uneasily.

“She is only talking nonsense, mamma,” interceded Mary. “Her nonsense ought to do us good. It can’t hurt her.”

“Indeed, I know that,” said the mother, a little awkwardly, but still emphatically; “but my old prejudices cling to me, I suppose. It grates upon my ear that a girl should even jest about running after a man.”

“Does it, now?” asked Kate, with a deliciously innocent air. “Why now, I can not only understand such a thing, but sympathize with it. If, for instance,” she went on with solemn impressiveness, “I saw the figure of a man in a long black cloak and a slouched hat on the horizon of my vision, and a voice cried out, ‘There goes Tennyson!’—oh, it is no use denying it!—I

would run miles for only a glimpse of the poet—our poet—my poet."

Her playful rhapsody provoked a smile even from her mother.

"I'd do the same," said dignified Adelaide, with genuine earnestness; "I'd do the same for a glance at Ruskin."

Then Mary's calm eyes shot their contribution of warmth, as she said, "I *should* walk faster if Darwin were ahead of me."

"I'm afraid we all soar too high, mamma," laughed Kate, smoothing her mother's hand with an affectionate gesture. "Our preferences won't harm us, will they?"

Poor lady! she smiled an approval, and dropped the subject. She felt that these girls were fast slipping out of her control. One of those long-drawn heavy sighs escaped her tremulous lips, that were always more tremulous after she had been betrayed into a smile.

The girls exchanged glances.

"Wouldn't you like a game at whist, mamma?" asked one.

"Or shall we go on with our readings?" asked Mary.

"Yes, if comment is allowed," cried Kate. "And oh, Mary, here's such a splendid article in the 'Modern Mystic,' on woman and woman's progress! Now is woman's time evidently, and here are we wasting with ideas, and can't use them."

"Speak for yourself, my dear. *I* am not wasting."

"But have you read it? It is signed 'R. B.' It goes to prove the immense power women ought to wield—and, haven't you heard mamma say," continued Kate, dubiously, "that woman always has ruled the *best* men?"

"Don't forget to emphasize the *best*, Kate; and suppose we substitute 'influenced,' or 'guided,' for ruled."

"That's splitting hairs. And I believe you know that Shakespeare went far to prove what mamma said."

"Bravo, Kate. Between mamma and Shakespeare, we can't be far out."

\* \* \* \*

O'Buncous and the colonel were breakfasting, the former was just reciting an exciting romance of which he was the hero.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting the story, but would you pass the dry toast?"

"I *could* not submit to be advised by a woman," the major continued with heat, while he unconsciously flourished the toast rack, and slid the half-dozen slices into the butter. "Oh, there, see what I've done! Well, it's lucky it's no worse. Mind, I'm ready to admit that she was right—events proved——"

At this moment Reilly came in.

"Good morning, doctor," said Bathurst. "Do help yourself out of consideration for a hungry man."

"Thanks. I am afraid I am interrupting O'Buncous," Reilly remarked, politely.

"Well, I was telling Bathurst a most

curious incident that happened to myself not so many years ago."

"Pray go on. I can pick you up."

"Don't begin again," put in the colonel.

"Well, perhaps such a thing never happened before. Our courtship was carried on entirely by telegraph. The expense was considerable; but what lover, worthy of the name, ever thinks of expense?"

"And she jilted you after all?" inquired Bathurst, absently.

"Jilted me! Let me tell you I never was jilted yet."

"Then were you dishonourable enough to jilt her?" asked the doctor.

"Reilly," exclaimed O'Buncous, with solemn emphasis, "that woman was like the goodly apple—rotten at the core. Bless you, when the affair had been going on for some time, I discovered that she was married."

"Really, O'Buncous!"

"I was as innocent as a lamb, Bathurst,"



continued the major, in measured impressive accents. "The Lord only knows why she hit upon me. I never saw her in my life."

"What!" exclaimed Reilly, pausing with his fork half-way to his mouth.

"I'll admit it sounds odd. But her object evidently was to rouse her husband's jealousy. 'Twas she proposed the telegrams, and they answered *her* purpose. I had not thought it necessary to moderate my language—which was always flowery."

"I wonder he didn't shoot you!"

"He tried," cried O'Buncous, with glee.

"I suppose, then, you shot him?"

"No. As luck would have it, a meddling friend told him I had never met the lady. Then he declined to fight when we came face to face. A cowardly fool! though, I will say, as fine and handsome a young fellow as I ever saw. He laughed at me! It would have been an insult to be shot by such a man. He was worthy of his wife!"

"Never mind, O'Buncous; take some

more pie. Here's Vivian coming; he will keep you company." And Bathurst wheeled round his chair and took up the *Times*.

The young man came in languidly. "Give me a cup of tea, Reilly, there's a good fellow."

"Why, you look half asleep."

"I am not awake yet."

"Then I'll wake you, Vin," said Bathurst, giving an energetic whirl to the castors of his chair. "Guess who has married the greatest heiress in England—Thorp-Cotton. There, now."

Vivian shook his head slowly, betraying not the feeblest interest.

"Why, young Cortez, of the Carabineers."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed O'Buncous. "I knew his aunt! How singular!"

"How—singular? That Cortez should have married because of your knowing his aunt? or that the fact of your knowing his aunt ought to have deterred him from matrimony?" asked Vivian, carelessly.



"Bless me soul ! nothing to do with his marrying. I only said it was remarkable that I should have known his aunt," responded the major, warmly.

"I still fail to discover the singularity," said Seymour, with the idle indifference he knew irritated O'Buncous. "Cortez couldn't marry as many times as somebody might claim acquaintance with his aunt."

"I'm dashed if I know what you mean ! You're too clever by half."

"Which, now, *is* the most peculiar incident—the one most deserving of historic record—Cortez having married, his having captured an heiress, your knowing his aunt, or the question *of* peculiarity ?"

"The last proposition, undoubtedly," remarked the doctor, with grave decision.

"Well," said O'Buncous, rising, a perplexed expression in his rubicund face, "I'll leave you to find out between yourselves, for the devil himself couldn't make out what you mean."

“Vin is anxious to get on horseback,” said Bathurst to Reilly. “Do you think that could be managed?”

Reilly did think it could be managed; he also thought he knew the reason for the young man’s anxiety.

“Riding will do him all the good in the world,” he said; and then went on irrelevantly, “You can spare me now.”

“It seems abominably selfish to say we can’t, but I really wish you could give me another week.”

“You’re very good, colonel. I will think about it.”

He had to admit to himself that he was not unwilling to stay. He was leaving apparently at the wrong moment. It was true he had dispelled Mrs. Elmore’s vague fears for her daughter, and had become familiar enough with Mary to laugh over their first advances.

## CHAPTER III.

HOW THE "SECLUSION" WAS "RESPECTED."

KATE'S wish had been gratified. Colonel Bathurst had not omitted to call at the Glade, nor indeed had any of the other gentlemen. Certainly, for a day or so after Vivian's removal, the Glade had been deserted by those frequent visitors; but after this slight reaction every one but Mrs. Elmore had apparently forgotten that there was any necessity for retirement, so the same party strolled out about the gardens in pairs: together, yet apart.

Yet there were subtle differences, visible and invisible. The gleams of sunshine that shot across the oaks fell in more slanting rays; the leaves were not now all upon the

trees, some of them rustled in agreeable accord with the swirl of the ladies' dresses, as they came into contact on the lawn. Occasionally some one might mention these slight changes in the scene, but never came the faintest allusion to those invisible changes that were as certainly there.

"The fact is, Bathurst," said Reilly, seriously, one day when they were alone, "I see no reason to abandon my first idea with regard to Mrs. Elmore. But I have not yet decided as to a direct line of treatment. In my opinion, she is suffering from a delusion strongly impressed upon her in time of trouble. I want time to think and learn something on the subject. Until then I shall not feel I have the right to act."

"Under such circumstances we are quite justified in any action. Now, *I* could not do it"—here Bathurst hesitated and looked at Reilly significantly—"but I think that, as a doctor, you could manage to inquire the real cause of her idiosyncrasy."

"I have made several ventures on the subject, but I can elicit nothing. I cannot ask a direct question ; I can only hint. She invariably ignores my hints."

Then he paused and smiled, as he could not help remembering how persistently they had ignored her hints that she wished to resume the strict seclusion of her life. Certainly the young ladies had not withdrawn themselves when any of the gentlemen appeared, and that was surely a good omen.

"I hope we are not annoying the ladies by our visits," said Bathurst, tentatively.

Then the other knew that Mrs. Elmore had also alluded to the frequency of their visits to the colonel.

"To *one* lady," Reilly said, "our visits have been a source of more than annoyance ; perhaps because they have been pleasant to the others. No, I don't think annoyance has anything to do with the question."

"I was half afraid that O'Buncous——" commenced Bathurst, hesitatingly.

“Oh, the major! No one cares two straws about him.”

“Now, it seems to me you are half-way behind the scenes. I have observed innuendoes between you and Mrs. Elmore; but I have no wish to tread upon forbidden ground.”

“We have all been doing that rather freely, and that is why we are requested to keep our distance.”

“We ought, I think, to—to make some slight explanation to Vin, and threaten O’Buncous. Even if Mrs. Elmore had shown us no special kindness, I *never* could permit her to suffer any annoyance.” Then he broke off, and after a pause resumed, “For myself, I intend to show my respect by an occasional visit—quite formal—merely—of course, merely—to show my respect and gratitude.”

“Exactly,” said Reilly, quickly. “That is quite my position. Mrs. Elmore has shown me so much honour in bestowing her confidence——”



"Confidence!"

"Well, we all knew there was some reason why the residents at the Glade desired absolute retirement; but she did not know that we knew. That is all she has admitted to me."

"If she had gone as far with me, I think I should have been tempted—yes, Reilly, I think I should have extorted the reason."

"So should I, if I could," was the sharp retort.

"That's acid," said Bathurst.

"Yes," said Reilly, with a slow smile. "Has it occurred to you that we all show more warmth to this matter than it's worth?"

"I won't say 'than it's worth'; I don't know what it's worth."

"Doesn't it appear to you that you do take more interest in these ladies than the occasion warrants?"

Bathurst took the home-thrust valiantly.



He did not allow it to affect him at all ; he was prepared for it.

“Not exactly,” he said, dryly. “It was not for myself I was concerned ; it was *your* interest I noticed, and your remarks show I was not in the wrong.”

“The past intimacy of my family——” began Reilly, in an affected formal tone.

Then both men looked straight at each other and smiled.

“Exactly,” said Bathurst, in the same affected tone. “And some subtle attraction, unaccountable and additional——”

“Come, come,” said Reilly, with his irresistibly good-natured laugh, “I’m not going to deny the subtle attractions of the Glade, but I do say emphatically that I’m not the only man who has felt them !”

Bathurst would have given something to know which attraction was the most potent, and he was trying to frame the question inoffensively and impersonally, if possible, when Reilly said—

"The thing that promises most danger is the state of your nephew."

"Do come to the point," broke in Bathurst, impatiently. "What of my nephew's state?"

"Well, here again my knowledge is entirely drawn from inference," said Reilly, with such evident caution that Bathurst was conscious of an abrupt confusion of his faculties. "When you take an impressionable boy, and bring him into frequent intercourse with such an exceptional woman as Miss Elmore" — he fixed his eyes upon Bathurst's face as he spoke deliberately — "when you do this, I say, knowing what power she must have, who can wonder at the result?"

"I—ah!—h'm—you confound me, Reilly. Your ideas are not all—all that they might be. You have wonderful prescience, I admit that. But the cleverest man must be out of calculations sometimes."

"You are not willing to believe it?" said Reilly, emphatically.

"I am *not*!" said the colonel, as strongly.  
"Vin is several years younger than she."

"A young man always falls in love with a woman a few years older than himself. It's proverbial?"

"I must have been mad to let him stay so long!"

"Say, rather, 'preoccupied.' Hush! here he comes."

Vivian came into the room looking radiant. The slight lameness—it was very slight now—made him only the more interesting.

"Ah! How well you're looking, Vin! Been riding, I suppose? I never see you at all now."

"Except at the Glade," said Vivian, slowly.

Reilly thought he read a veiled meaning.

"Yes," answered Bathurst, sharply. "Yes; *I* go there to look after other people."

He spoke with unquestionable emphasis.

"So do *I*," drawled Vivian, with the same imperturbability.

"But—but it is my duty," said Bathurst, reddening.

Reilly strolled off, and became warmly interested in a view from the farthest window.

"I'd stake my existence, now, that you had been out the whole morning in the Glade gardens."

The colonel spoke warmly, and was evidently more excited than the occasion seemed to warrant.

"You would be safe," was the calm, deliberate reply.

"Vin, you are a gentleman by nature and training. Now, I'm not good at hints, so I'm sure you'll take me in good part when I tell you that your—ah—um—attentions are not well received."

"I am the best judge of that, uncle," retorted the young man, with great equanimity.

"How infernally awkward I am!" thought Bathurst. He was well aware that he stood

at a disadvantage. Could it be because the boy looked so uncommonly handsome?

“Look here, Vin,” he said, explanatorily, “you know as well as I do there is some reason why Mrs. Elmore desires her daughters to lead this secluded life. Well, the fact is you are the very man to break a girl’s heart. Of course, you wouldn’t do it if you knew. But recollect that these girls have seen nothing of the world, and—and the attention you might lavish on a woman of society, which would excite no remark, might in this case cause a world of misunderstanding.”

“Now, that’s a curious contradiction,” Vivian began leisurely. “Society, it appears to me, is more addicted to construe common politeness into ‘attentions’ than to ignore them. The ladies of the Glade do not seem to understand attentions.”

“There is the danger I wish to point out. A girl might fall in love without knowing it.”

"Then it wouldn't hurt her."

"Don't talk lightly. I am in earnest."

"So I perceive. So also am I."

"No; for you foresee nothing. Now, I would avoid the danger."

"Is that why you go to the Glade so often?" inquired Vivian, innocently. There was not a shade of satire in his tone.

"I—I—I am quite an ol—another man."

"You were wise in the substitute. Which lady do you prefer?"

"Well, for cool impertinence, Vin, you reach anything I ever met!" exclaimed Bathurst.

"There seems to be so little in mere preference," said Vivian, with light indifference. "Of course, if I had been alluding to a stronger feeling, the question might be more pertinent—and perhaps, to your mind, not so impertinent. Suppose we make that the question now?"

"Suppose we tell a young dog, who thinks himself devilish clever, that he can't



by the thin disguise of retaliation avoid being found out? I know you too well to dream you would offend a lady; and Mrs. Elmore has admitted to Reilly that our visits ought to cease."

This final clause was put in with great vigour.

"Ah! she has made an exception of me all alone, and until I receive a personal hint, I shall, out of mere gratitude, occasionally call."

"Hang it! if we call—you—and I—and Reilly, who's to prevent O'Buncous from calling?"

"Is there any reason why you and Reilly should call? Pray don't disturb yourself, uncle. Put a stop to all the calling at once. I can quite sufficiently maintain the family dignity."

"No, Vin. Your age precludes it. It is I who, by virtue of my residence here——"

"And by what 'virtue' does Reilly excuse himself?"



"The past relations of their families, and the confidence Mrs. Elmore thought proper to repose in him."

"I wish she had tried me!" exclaimed Vivian, hotly. "I would have got at something tangible."

This echoing of himself only roused Bathurst's strong desire to penetrate the mystery.

"Your own interest betrays you," he said. "For your own sake, as well as hers, the acquaintance must be broken. It is an unfortunate episode."

"That is not clearly demonstrated—yet."

"Then will you tell me, in strict confidence, if it is your design to bring that girl to love you?"

Vivian's blue eyes scintillated as he replied carelessly, "Well, for cool impertinence, I never knew your match! If you will disabuse your mind of 'misfortune to the girl,' I don't mind telling you that if Miss

Elmore condescended to fall in love with me, I should be the happiest man alive."

"Adelaide!"

The name, in a tone of painful conviction, escaped Bathurst in his self-absorption.

Adelaide! The word startled Vivian by its fervour; but through his surprise he was quick enough to take the advantage. Checking the smile on his lips, he said buoyantly—

"All right, uncle! Recollect, I've not admitted anything about the lady in question, but I've found *you* out!"

Bathurst recovered himself.

"Damned mean thing to do!" he exclaimed, pulling himself together. "However, having gone so far, the best thing, my boy, would be a mutual understanding."

"It's been a misunderstanding, quite long enough," said Vivian, enjoying the joke. It was but for a moment; then he went on impressively, looking straight into his uncle's disturbed and gloomy face, "I don't in the least object to your knowing that *Kate*

Elmore is the girl I am bound to marry—if I can. And that, failing her, I shall never marry any one else."

"Spoken like a man and a lover!"

"And a brother!" interpolated Vivian.

Bathurst heaved a sigh, a long-drawn satisfactory sigh, of relief.

"We have very little to joke about. What line, pray, are we to take next?"

"Medicine is the most promising 'line' for us; Reilly's our man," said Vivian, sententiously.

"Yes; and he is going. And so, remember, must you."

## CHAPTER IV.

“LET US ALWAYS BURY UNPLEASANT  
MEMORIES.”

KATE, dressed in her green cloth habit, was vigorously brushing her hat before starting with Ajax, who stood looking very rough and pretty, the mutilation of his flowing tail not proving disastrous to his beauty.

Of course, a little caressing took place. It was enjoyed on both sides; after which they started. The invigorating air was alone a pleasure, the delight of easy rhymic movement was the next, the panorama of charming scenery was another delight; and, because pleasures, like troubles, never come alone, here before her, just at the turn of the narrow shaded lane, his horse walking

slowly, and looking as languid as did his master's drooping hand, that let the reins fall loose, came Vivian Seymour.

It was very strange, of course, because Kate had not ridden for some days, and every day had found Vivian at the Glade. She was conscious of the peculiarity of the situation, but she was too brave to shirk it. Besides, if she turned back—but that she could not do. There was no alternative; they were bound to meet.

Then the listless man on the horse caught sight of her, and once more he became erect, and drew up his horse's head to a sense of duty. There was no lack of interest in the eyes that met hers.

"I was going to call on you," he said, slowly.

"Ah! now you will have to call upon some one else," she said.

"Shall I? It was you I wanted to see."

"Well, you can't; I shall not be there."

She had coloured, flushed that exquisite celestial red he loved to watch. Her light words betrayed the nervousness she always felt with him until they had talked for some little time.

“I am sorry for that,” he said gravely, his eyes wandering about her adoringly, “because I—I might not have another opportunity of saying good-bye to you.”

He was watching her intently, and saw with keen delight the warm blush fade into pallor.

“Indeed? Yes; you—you are going to follow your cousin to Madras?”

“No!” he said.

He had turned his horse’s head, and they were now travelling along the narrow lane, with the cathedral arch of elms, just as slowly as he had come.

“No?” she repeated.

“No! My uncle is urging me to go home. Of course it’s necessary I should do so some day.”



"It can only be amazing to me that you should want urging," she said.

"Ah, that would naturally occur to you. There can be no place like home to one who knows no other place."

"That sounds like ingratitude."

"It is not so. My home and my mother are as dear to me as anything of the kind can be."

"There can't be anything of the kind," said Kate, stoutly.

"Well, not quite of the kind," he admitted, seeing an excellent opportunity for a Shakespearian quotation, but resisting it.

"But there are other interests that we develop—other——"

"Yes, yes; such as music and cooking and conchology," said Kate, shifting uneasily from the point. "You never told me anything about your 'views.' I know a great deal about Doctor Reilly's and Colonel Bathurst's. Perhaps you are like me—you haven't developed any?"



“I am developing one very rapidly,” he said, resolutely. “Did you notice my abstraction when we met? I was solving a difficult psychological problem, of which I was the uninteresting centre. I think I might be able to arrive at the height of ‘views’ if you would assist me.”

“Oh, oh! I haven’t arrived at my own yet,” said Kate, still nervously on guard.

There was a difference, somehow, between being inside those high nunnery walls and outside. They both felt it. Vivian was not so thoroughly at his ease from the very sense of freedom, and Kate was much disturbed by his unusual gravity.

“Then you don’t care to know what I was thinking about?” he asked, significantly.

“It’s too much to ask people to be interested in our thoughts,” she said. And, in assuming the light impertinence that became her, she confused him and disarmed the gravity that was rapidly setting towards solemnity. “How beautiful these trees are!

Just here, where they droop over and touch, is, I think, the prettiest part. I can reach the boughs quite easily." She lifted her arm and pulled down a branch. "See, the leaves are quite fresh and green yet. I don't see a sign of the sere and yellow—do you?"

And he said "No," in a low impressive voice, looking at her intensely while she spoke.

But she, instinctively wise, kept her eyes away, though she did not know what the danger was she would avoid.

"Oh, what a beauty! Do look, Mr. Seymour. It is positively magnificent. Look at the brilliant colouring; like velvet, too. Did you ever see anything finer?"

She held out her hand, and on the finger of the dog-skin glove was stretched an enormous caterpillar. It was beautiful; he could but acknowledge that, and he looked on in something like amazement while she carefully removed the insect to the brim of her hat.

“It is not intended to be an ornament. I must take it home to Mary ; she will enjoy it so.”

Vivian’s mind being much exorcised, and having been for days, nay weeks, dwelling somewhat morbidly on one subject, found the ambiguous sentence rather difficult to digest ; so he said vaguely, while he strove to find his way back to the line he had lost—

“Has she—has she any other peculiar fancies ?”

“Oh yes ! Butterflies, moths, ants, spiders, insects of all kinds. She raves about them. Hunts them from unheard-of places ; gloats over them all equally. Whenever I see a choice morsel, I always think of Mary.”

“Choice morsel !” reiterated Vivian, still forcing his mind against its will to follow suit.

Kate looked at him, discovering a peculiar and unlooked-for meaning in his impressive accents. Then she laughed, a low sweet,

delicious laugh that seemed to enforce one to join her.

“You never did suppose? Oh yes, I can see by the aversion in your face that you *did*. No, I declare she does eat them. What a ridiculous mistake! Don’t deny it, please!”

“Since you are enjoying it so, I have no objection to accept the blame.”

“Forgive me for laughing! Dell always has told me what a wild talker I am. Now, had I said ‘specimen’ instead of ‘morsel,’ your ears might have been opened to a suggestion of entomology.”

“You see,” said Vivian, haltingly, “I am unaccustomed to meet young ladies who have pursuits——”

Then both laughed. This time palpably at his embarrassment.

“I’ll help you out of the difficulty,” said Kate, gleefully. “You could easily have turned the tables on me. You should have treated the matter scientifically, as Doctor

Reilly would. You should attempt most learnedly to show how irrational it is to ignore certain articles of food, because we do not understand them, and so on. You should always pretend to take the upper hand, and to know more than the person to whom you are talking. Although in my case there is no immediate necessity to put yourself to much trouble on that account."

All this was most unfavourable to Vivian's frame of mind. He saw clearly he could not deal with Kate in this light mood. Perhaps—well, perhaps fate was in his favour—perhaps it would be indiscreet at the present time if he could compass his design. Yet how his heart yearned to speak out! But if he must be frivolous, he would make the attempt. And he did. But anything more awkward could not be conceived; for he was not accustomed to use his mind absolutely at his will, and he was too self-absorbed to play with words.

Still there was no want of cordiality



between these two, for Kate chatted on and seemed to be unconscious that he spoke little. She proposed taking the road that led down by the river.

"Because then, you know, I am near home, and mamma detests my being far away. She likes to be able to get a glimpse of me by watching for a while from the verandah. You know there is a capital straight path for some distance on our side of the river. And it's so safe there. She likes that."

"Yes, naturally," said he, somewhat gloomily.

"Now, Mr. Seymour, I'm going to say good-bye, because—I'm sure you are homesick, say what you may. And—and—I can give mamma your kind regards and—compliments, if you will, and save you all the agony of leave-taking."

She spoke hurriedly, the tone denying the lightness of her words, she put out her hand, and he took it mechanically.

“I am not going, however,” he said. “I am capable of enduring my own agony, and I should not think of treating your mother so ungratefully as to leave her without a word.”

Then they rode on slowly.

“You are always in advance,” he said. “You seem impatient——”

“You seem very much inclined to find fault,” she said, playfully. “I don’t come out to prowl like a beast of prey among ruins at moonlight. I should be a second Una, and have my lion instead of my little gentle Ajax, if that were my choice.”

“Whatever might be your taste, the part you played would be perfection,” said he, impulsively.

“Ah ! that is to make up for your rudeness about my impatience,” she said. “What nonsense we are talking !”

“People always do talk nonsense when they are afraid,” said he, sententiously.

“Afraid ?”



“Yes. As we are now—to talk sense.”

On this, Kate was still for a while. She could afford to relax her efforts to keep up the light ball of conversation she had chosen, because she was nearing home, and felt that the danger had passed. So they were both silent, though hardly conscious that it was so until they were in view of the Glade gardens. Then he said suddenly—

“How silent you are!”

“And you too. You made me so. Silence, I suppose, is like yawning—infectious. Well, one can’t help having nothing to say.”

“That’s not my difficulty; I have too much.”

“Dell says it’s always better not to speak more than half your mind. So you are on the safe side, Mr. Seymour.”

“I wish I were,” he said, earnestly. “Is it not strange how any association of ideas will invariably aid us to bring back the prominent subject in our minds?”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Kate, thoughtfully; “it sometimes diverts us. Just as one must think of horses or salts when Epsom is mentioned. It’s a matter of association, but it rather leads one off the point of Epsom.”

“You could make anything diverting, I believe. I am not unmindful of the radiance you threw over my dull life a week or two ago.”

“Oh, oh! Let us always bury unpleasant memories.”

“That will be one of my loveliest and best until the end of time.”

Oh, Kate! It is well that the Glade gardens have an occupant, for this last stronger thrust had startled her self-control, and left her wordless, helpless; only the bright glow in her face and the drooping eyelids showing that, now the battle had ended, the conqueror was showing signs of weakness.

Now he felt brave enough, but now was

too late ; for here advanced Mary on seeing them. Her calm clear eyes rested upon Kate and Seymour ; when he noted the look, he saw at once she observed her sister's excitement. And was he right ? Did he detect a gleam of tenderness in those cold eyes ? Did he detect a subtle warmth in the touch of the hand she had placed in his ? Sympathy is so instinctively recognized by us all that we hardly ever fail to discover it where it exists. Kate had forgotten all about the caterpillar. It was parading with serpentine motion the brim of her green felt hat, and, as it advanced, Mary discerned it, and seized the instant for relieving her sister. She put out her hand quietly, saying—

“ Be still, Kate. Let me take it tenderly. How thoughtful you are ! Did you know, Mr. Seymour, that this beautiful creature is really a rarity ? Let me call your attention to these curious diagonal stripes. You can observe here in the sunshine all the peculiar beauties—— ”

And Kate's great eyes were open now. What was the mystery in their soft misty depths? They were like the eyes of one suddenly awakened from a mesmeric trance.

Lookers-on are said to see most of the game, yet four people spent a very pleasant time under the oak trees, chatting gaily and easily as people do, veiling their troubles if not forgetting them. Who could expect, witnessing this pretty sylvan scene and hearing the gay shreds of talk, dream there was an undercurrent of tragedy here? The group dispersed; the last to join it was the first to leave. Mrs. Elmore went in on some domestic concern. Vivian must perforce make his conventional adieu. Mary, with calm benignity, kept close beside her sister; and when the heavy door grated back upon the huge hinges, she unobtrusively moved away, and left Kate standing on the lawn, a statue of mute despair.

She looked composed enough, pale enough now. She stood still, her hands falling

together tightly clasped. There was no one to see her. She knew it, and that was why she became sensible of the pain that had been gradually forcing itself upon her. Now the horror of it, the shame of the strong feeling that possessed her, wrung her impulsive soul. If she could have annihilated every atom of her consciousness at that moment, she would have rejoiced. As it was, a minute's bitter antagonism, a rapid movement out of sight, and down sank the dainty proud head between her hands—down she must sink on her knees, lower still till her face rested on the dewy grass, crushed by the weight of her own self-contempt.

Oh, was it not contemptible to surrender one's self to lose all one's force, to feel it all absorbed in another being? What was his going or coming to her? Was she not set aside from such things? Other girls were free to associate with him, to walk and talk with him, to listen to his charmed voice, to delight in his manly beauty, to rejoice in his love.

But for her such dreams were sin ! Had not all nature whispered to her of the delights of his love ? Not a breeze but had murmured it, not a ripple but had lulled her in the dream. All beauty—all that was high and pure and true—now belonged to her love. The glory of a sunset, the poetry of storm, the familiar scents of flowers, the pathetic song of a bird, would all have an added meaning in them *now*. All things beautiful and all things good were part of Vivian Seymour now, or part of love that played such strange havoc in her soul.



## CHAPTER V.

“ TO STAY THE WHIRLWIND.”

ALTHOUGH Mrs. Elmore had perfect confidence in her daughters, her mind was thoroughly disturbed about them. Her conscience told her that it had been inconsistent in the last degree to permit any intimacy with men like these ; and yet so naturally had the friendship grown, that she was painfully conscious of having a very natural pleasure in such intimacy herself.

Her hint to Reilly had not had the desired effect ; there had been no fewer visits on that account. Still, she felt she could take no further action now ; for had not Seymour gone ? and was not the doctor going ?

Adelaide, too, was to leave this week. The whole party would be broken up, and her trouble in the matter would be over.

But Mrs. Elmore could not get over one present annoyance that was fresh in her memory. Had not Kate and Vivian Seymour been out riding together? Now, it was a positive offence to her that such a girl as Kate should be seen careering over the country to be picked up by any chance acquaintance—she quite forgot there was no such thing as chance acquaintance. She had been trained in a different school of manners herself, and she felt she ought never to have given way in the matter of the pony.

She did not approach the subject as an important one ; she thought that injudicious. Her speech had just the common tone when she said, “ Kate, my love, I want you to give up riding for a little while—just to oblige me. You have plenty of interests that will answer for a time—the garden

requires a deal of attention just now, and I should be glad to see you trying to fill Adelaide's place a little.”

“I should never do that! However, I'll try to make some of those dishes you were so fond of, for all our sakes. But why do you want me to give up riding?”

“I have been nervous lately—about Dell going. For your riding it was always dangerous——”

“Nonsense! you old darling. Nothing will ever happen to such a scapegrace as I. I can understand your anxiety for a saint like Mary, or for such a paragon of all the virtues as Dell.”

“My dear Kate, seriously I must ask you to give up riding for a time.”

Now, a remarkable thing happened. Kate, with all her sportive ways, was thoroughly good-tempered; but now, quite unaccountably, she felt angry. She twitched her handkerchief impatiently, and the colour mounted in her face.

“You may as well be candid, mamma. I’m not afraid to hear anything you have to say. I can see you haven’t given me the true reason. Although I am not given to intellectual pursuits, I am not a fool! You are annoyed because I happened to meet Mr. Seymour. Surely you don’t think I had arranged to meet him? I have been called ‘alarmingly honest.’ Are you going to doubt my word now, when I say the meeting was accidental?”

During all the hours that had elapsed since that interview, this girl’s mind had dwelt with various emotions upon each word, each glance, each incident. She was fully aware, now it was over, what that strain had been to her. She knew she was nearer now to temptation than she could possibly have imagined herself a few months ago. But, proud in herself of her ability to defend herself even against her own heart, she could not bear the faintest aspersion on her discretion.

“Hush, Kate!” said her mother, sadly and reproachfully “I could not doubt you. You are right in one way; but I wanted to spare your feelings.”

“My feelings?” cried Kate.

“You misconceive me again. You have done nothing wrong, because I permitted it. It is to my shame that you should be seen galloping over the country—like—like a highwayman——”

One of Kate’s ringing laughs interrupted her, and it brought back Kate’s good-humour.

“Unattended,” continued Mrs. Elmore, gravely, “and by such men as Colonel Bathurst and Mr. Seymour.”

“Oh, mamma dear, it is time we became consistent. Of what earthly consequence can it be what ideas Mr. Seymour forms of us, or of our ways? As you have often said, ‘we stand outside.’ I am quite prepared for the position. The colonel is a very charming man, but let him and his nephew

sink into insignificance. They are not going to disturb us."

Kate's tone was grand and disdainful. Mrs. Elmore was easily impressed, and she loved much. She owed it to this self-reliant girl to tell the truth, and she would do so.

"Your common sense, my dear," she said, "is, I confess, seldom at fault. We should not allow the opinion of any stranger to interfere with our proceedings. But I was weak enough to be annoyed by the consideration that Doctor Reilly would disapprove and wonder at my permitting you to run such risks. He is a link to my past life, Kate. That, perhaps, is why——"

"Let that alone! He is gone. We are not to be judged by common rules nor common arguments. Did you tell him so?"

"Of course, I gave him to understand that we had weighty reasons for our seclusion."

"And that we had agreed to make the best of our lives, depending entirely upon our own resources."



“Yes.”

“And that, thanks to you, good sweet mother, we succeed pretty fairly.” Then she stooped and kissed her mother’s forehead, and they were happy again. “And what did he say to it all?”

“He? oh!” Mrs. Elmore suddenly remembered what he had said on the occasion. And Kate was so honest and so quick that she could not hope to deceive her. “I cannot tell you, child,” she said, quietly.

“Ah, I see. Now, that’s the way to treat me. I think I can pretty well guess what he did say.”

Mrs. Elmore thought not. Her expression was sad and thoughtful as Kate went on, a radiant smile upon her bright face as she allowed her fancy scope.

“Yes. He said it was a dreadful handful for one woman to have, and that you’d never be able to manage it; that we might all as well be allowed to go our own way as not; that, in fact, you were giving yourself use-

less trouble in attempting to stay the whirlwind——”

“Hold your tongue, Kate!” cried Mrs. Elmore, putting up her hand.

The figure of speech so distractingly reminded her of one he had used that she did not like it. He had quoted Scott’s line—

“Go fetter flame with flaxen band.”

And this close guessing was too distressing to dwell upon.

\* \* \* \*

“I can’t believe that Dell has gone. Only yesterday!”

Mary was the speaker. She paused after the words, and looked in Kate’s face. The tears had rushed into the eyes of that impetuous girl as she met the glance.

“You need not remind me of it; it seems that we have been parted for months already. Good heavens! how cold you are, Mary! I noticed you this morning when mamma was struggling through her letter, and you were

positively calm — comfortably calm. *I* couldn't have spoken for the world.”

“Yes, dear ; and for very much less than the world, I assure you,” replied her sister, with a tinge of sarcasm. “It was because I saw mamma's condition that I controlled myself ; it was because she found it so difficult to speak that *I* found it—well—even possible to speak cheerfully. Would it have been better, do you think, if we had all wept together ? ”

“It has been the first parting,” answered Kate, slowly, and quite ignoring her sister's words. “I felt as if I should choke every time I glanced round the table. When can you remember one of us being absent at breakfast ? ”

“That's just one of those things we ought never to make into a regret. We certainly have had exceptional good fortune—not one of us has ever been ill, for instance ; we are all blest with sufficient——”

“Oh, spare me the list of our advantages !

I am tired to death of them," exclaimed Kate, impatiently.

"Don't say that, dear ; it seems like sacrilege to our mother."

"I *never* mean anything against mamma," Kate cried, warmly ; "I consider her perfect—absolutely *perfect*. But I cannot, and will not, pretend to what I do not feel. It is true, there are advantages ; but when you come to estimate them, what are they ? We have ample means ; we are healthy in mind and body, but possessing sufficient intelligence to know that these things, which by some may be regarded as the essence of prosperity, are to us but disadvantages that make our state only the more difficult to bear."

"You speak in riddles, Kate. Are you going to tell me I should find ill health or poverty easier than my present physical comfort ?"

"I can't answer for you ; you are fond of comfort. We are constitutionally different.

Now, if I were disabled by disease or accident, I should be perfectly willing—should be constrained by every law of reason to abandon natural impulse ; but, according to the law of nature, I should have none of the impulses I have now. Or, if poverty is to be considered, why, if I were to be obliged to work for my living, I should be *glad*." Here the girl stopped in her warm harangue and laughed. "Don't look so horrified, Mary ; I speak only for myself. I really should rejoice if I personally had to work for my bread ; my life would then have a motive."

"Have you mistaken yourself, Kate, or have we mistaken you ? You have ever been the gayest of us all, the wildest, most careless, the light of the household. What has happened to you ? You suddenly become more serious than either of us in the contemplation of the lives we are destined to live. What has happened to you ?"



There was no reply. The question evoked another in Kate's heart, and set her rebellious pulses throbbing with a fear she dared not own. Herself, her life, the potentialities of her being, were so enigmatical that it was hardly possible she should know what possessed her.

"What is wrong with you, Kate?" repeated her sister.

"I do not know," she said, thoughtfully. "You, Mary, have studied Nature, and she has repaid you; that is why you are so calm and content. Perhaps I am backward in learning. Will Nature grant me your calm, and make me content with a life which is the nearest approach to nothingness—unmeaningly prolonged?"

"I am certainly *calm*," replied Mary, with a half-checked sigh; but she did not repeat the word "content." "It has been one of the principal aims of my life to be calm, and it is pleasant to know that I have succeeded. And, Katie, I trust that I shall



always succeed, even at the risk of being considered unfeeling by my sister.”

“I said cold, Mary, not unfeeling ; you know I do not think that. Oh, it is maddening to one who craves for movement—for action.” Here, with one of her light bewitching laughs, she checked her seriousness, and went on merrily, “I am to be a caged tigress, I suppose ; that is my *rôle*. I should do too much damage free.”

“Free, dear, you know we can never be. Can’t you derive some consolation from the fact mamma has so often put before us—that if we miss the stronger interests in life, we also miss the greater pains ?”

“Mary, there is no satisfaction in anything !” exclaimed the girl, with an emphasis that startled and pained her sister. “But not a word to mamma—not a word of that sort.”

“It is the object of my life to spare her,” said Mary, solemnly.

Mrs. Elmore had gone to her room alone,

with Adelaide's letter in her hand. There was a sting of disappointment in it, and, scrupulously conscientious as this woman was, she could but admit it to herself. Still, she argued that her own overstrained anxiety was alone to blame; for here was the first letter she had ever received from her daughter, and, accustomed as they were to confidential speech, the message could but appear strange. The fault was, of course, all with herself; so she would read the letter again.

“ Grimslade.

“ MY DARLING MOTHER,

“ I am here at last, and quite impatient to find my work—so impatient am I that I would commence at once if I could. Mr. Wallis was not at the station, but I soon found my way to the vicarage. I almost felt glad my first step was an independent one. Everything is so strange—you will smile at my simplicity—for everything is

bound to be strange to me. I believe the taste for the world must be an acquired one ; am I right ? These few words are for your present satisfaction as to my safety. I shall have time to write to-morrow. I can't send you my love, because it is with you always.

“ Your own

“ DELL.”

And why was Mr. Wallis not at the station ? He ought, under the circumstances she had explained he certainly ought, to have been there ; or, being unable to go himself, could he not have sent a deputy ? Adelaide found everything strange. This was inevitable. But the allusion to the world being an acquired taste could only mean that it was at present distasteful. It was—yes, it undoubtedly was—a thoroughly unsatisfactory letter. The last sentence only seemed to belong to Dell.

“ My own Dell,” she murmured, and shut her eyelids close, resolved to subdue the

rising tears. It became her to be brave, who had so brave a child. "My own Dell, whom I can neither guide nor help now! She does not seem to be mine now."

It was not as though she had gone as young women ordinarily go away from home, to spend a happy time with pleasant people. Adelaide had no bright, cheerful messages to send. She had gone out alone, out among strangers to work. Was it for this, the mother's heart cried out, was it for this the girl had been trained to be what she was?

Then she walked downstairs and heard Kate's delicious voice practising an anthem. She saw Mary's graceful form enveloped in her long fur-lined cloak—for the mornings were getting cool now—saw her pause for a moment and bow.

And there, just entering the gate, she saw Bathurst and Reilly. There was some hesitation on the side of the gentlemen, but she—Mary—walked on under the oaks, to all appearance forgetful of them.

Mrs. Elmore stood at the window unseen, and watched. The men talked for, perhaps, a minute ; then Reilly, with a wave of the hand, turned on the left and followed Mary, while Bathurst walked towards the house, with the lagging footstep and slightly bent head that betoken preoccupation of mind. A suspicion crossed her thoughts, although of what, it would have been hard to say. She shuddered.

"I shall fancy I hear what they are saying next. Anxiety unhinges my mind. My withdrawal from the world makes me, like Dell, incapable of comprehending it."

"You are an early visitor," she said, when Bathurst and she met.

Now, this was obviously a question, although he merely replied, "Yes. And what a chill morning! May I ask if you have yet heard of your daughter's arrival at Grimslade?"

"She has sent a scrap of a note for what she calls my satisfaction."



“It is certainly for mine,” said he, politely.

“Did you call so early for that reason?” asked she.

Now, this was a question that could not be so easily evaded, and, like a gentleman, he gave an answer.

“Yes, and no, Mrs. Elmore. I should certainly have called for that reason at some later hour in the day, but the fact is Reilly leaves for Windermere this morning, and I came to help him through his farewells.”

“And where is he?” she inquired, gravely.

“He waylaid Miss Mary in the garden, and—he did not wish to miss her.”

“Was it not your intention to assist him through his farewells?” she asked.

And there was a bitter tone in her voice, caused by her anguish, that affected Bathurst slightly. He felt a trifle like a traitor.

“Reilly is a thorough good fellow,” he said incidentally; “I’m sorry he’s going. But nothing lasts—at least nothing that’s



pleasant. It's our difficulties that stick so close to us."

"Ah, but you are by nature a very Sybarite," said she, with a wan smile. "Why, Kate, how short your practice has been this morning!"

Kate came into the room languidly. "I'm tired of playing to the empty rooms. I wish I could people them according to my own pleasure. Ah, colonel! I did not see you."

She shook hands with her visitor, and ventured on no further explanation. She appeared now to be in the brightest possible spirits, and talked with even more than her usual vivacity. Neither of her listeners was blind to the fact that she had made the effort.

"She is naturally depressed about her sister, and won't allow her mother to see it," he thought.

"How odd Kate has been lately! A change seems to be settling upon us all," thought Mrs. Elmore. "Now she is overdoing it in

her desire to appear cheerful. It is the mistake people mostly make when they are acting."

They sat talking for some time, and insensibly the older people followed Kate's lead. They were laughing almost against their will at one of her keenest repartees, when Mrs. Elmore awoke to the fact that half an hour had elapsed since the colonel had arrived, and that Mary and Reilly were still absent.

"At what time does Doctor Reilly's train leave?" she asked.

"We—we really ought to be going now. I think he must have forgotten; I myself had forgotten," he added, with a playful signal of reproof to Kate, "and I can forgive him. Cannot you? With your permission, Mrs. Elmore, I will look him up."

"Don't go, colonel," said Kate. "Here they come. I had a glimpse of a hat, and that must really mean the rest of the costume."

"Is a man nothing more than a tailor's dummy in your estimation? My dear young lady, you should give us credit for a little more personality."

In another minute Reilly entered the room alone. His bearing to Mrs. Elmore's eyes was suggestive of exultation kept under restraint. Bathurst recognized that his manner was more free and spontaneous than was natural, and concluded that he, like Kate, was in reality depressed and out of tone.

"I have allowed time, the proverbial enemy, to steal a march on me," said Reilly. "Mrs. Elmore, forgive a hasty adieu. I start to-day for home. An expectant mother awaits her only son. I have literally only time to say good-bye, and to thank you once more for extending so much kindness to my unworthy self."

"Not unworthy, I hope," she answered, with that soft pathetic smile of hers. "But in speaking to me of your mother, Doctor Reilly, be sure you make her understand

that—that my peculiar circumstances have prevented me from showing you that kindness which is in my heart to you. And, for your father's sake, I wish it had been possible to make you as welcome as I could wish——”

“Not another word, Mrs. Elmore,” said Reilly, taking her hand. “I understand, and, what is more, I appreciate your kindness the more thoroughly because I appreciate you.—Miss Kate, say something kind at parting—do say something that will take the sting out of your past satire.”

“Good-bye, Doctor Reilly,” the girl answered, with an affectation of extreme melancholy, “good-bye. I trust you will not deserve the sting of the next insect that molests you. However, you have always an antidote on hand in the shape of counter-irritation.”

Mrs. Elmore herself accompanied the gentlemen to the porch, where they lingered for another minute in talk, and then hurried

away. Was it only her morbid fancy? Did not Reilly turn and pause for a moment, and take a survey of the house, almost as though he sought some signal?

Wrong! of course she was wrong; for when she returned to the morning-room, there, beside Kate, was Mary, looking quite unconcerned and fresh and rosy from her walk.

"You were a long time saying good-bye to Doctor Reilly, Mary," she observed.

"Say rather, mother dear, that he was a long time saying good-bye to me."

"There is no difference," Mrs. Elmore said, impatiently. "How was it?"

The slight colour, so unusual in Mary's cheeks, deepened; but she answered coolly enough, "We strolled along, chatting. He seemed to forget till we were coming in that there was a train due at 11.30."

The tone was indifference itself; even her mother felt that she owed a word of conciliation for her base suspicion.

"Yes, yes," she said hazily; "he is very

like what his father was when I knew him. Not so handsome, but quite as nice—very nice.”

“But not quite nice enough to eat—eh, Mary?” said Kate, laughing. “Oh, why will not somebody invent a better adjective for common use than ‘nice’? It is so mean, so poor; it implies so little that the implication almost amounts to nothing. Besides, it is applied to everything, from your sauce up to your prime minister. Your use of that stupid word, mamma, comes of your previous knowledge of ‘Vanity Fair.’ I verily believe if I heard any one call *me* ‘a nice girl’——”

Both ladies laughed.

“I suppose you think that nobody would be lunatic enough to think me nice. Well——”

She stopped abruptly, and coloured uneasily; so did her mother. Mary made no such sign; she resumed the thread of the discourse calmly.



“The word is quite comprehensive enough for me, although I am not limited to a choice of adjectives. Doctor Reilly has not only proved entertaining, considerate, and unselfish, but thoroughly agreeable and instructive.”

“‘Not only amusing, but instructive,’ as the newspapers say,” put in Kate, with pretentious gravity.

“You need not laugh,” said Mary, who had passed over the embarrassment of the situation. “He has taught me more of science, and more especially of physiology, than ever I knew before,” concluded she, with a gravity untinged by humour.

## CHAPTER VI.

“THE GLADE IS PARADISE.”

MRS. ELMORE'S heart leaped at the sight of Adelaide's second letter. She could hardly keep her voice steady as she commenced to read it. It never once occurred to her that the girls should be unaware of their sister's movements, or of the kind of life she was about to lead.

After affectionate greetings, the letter went on—

“‘I have grave doubts as to its being wise to foster a love of beauty, because if I had no delight in charming shapes, colours, lights, and shades, I should not suffer the positive discomfort that real ugliness causes me. Now, all this preamble goes to prove

that Grimslade is not only wofully ugly, but abominably dirty. Compared with it the Glade is Paradise.'

"There, Kate, you hear that? This is a glimpse of the outside world you wished to——"

Kate put her hand upon her mother's unoccupied one. She was not ready with her usual capricious retort.

"I cannot give you systematic accounts. I shall simply speak of everything to *you* in the light in which it strikes *me*. My errors may be the result of my ignorance. Mrs. Wallis appears to be a very singular woman. If she is common and not rare, I am sorry for humanity. She paints her face a bright red in parts, and an unnatural white in others. She looks young at a first glance—but it must be only the first. Her manner is distant and cold to me. She behaved absurdly with her husband at breakfast this morning. Mr. Wallis is reorganizing his staff of district workers,

and I am to serve my apprenticeship in that way, in order to get some knowledge of the people among whom I am to work. I must admit to you that I am disappointed in a measure, and I think the feeling is inevitable under such circumstances as mine. Given a little of that precious allotment of day and night we are pleased to call time, and I shall find many mysteries solved, and puzzling inconsistencies turned into commonplace facts. I started with delight, with the prospect of beginning somewhere with Mr. Hazel, the curate. He impressed me as a very simple-minded man who wished to talk, but could find nothing to say. At last, with evident timidity, he hinted that I should not find the vicarage a pleasant home. Finding I took the information passively, he went on—"The truth is that Mrs. Wallis is desperately jealous of her husband, and in his position it is next to impossible to avoid situations that look suspicious." I replied coldly that I

would rather not hear of the difficulties of the vicar's private life. “I am here upon business that will occupy my whole time—I have no interest outside that.” He looked at me very oddly and said no more.”

“Oh, what fun I would have!” broke out Kate. “I would give that horrid woman cause to remember me.”

“Hush, Kate! you don't know what you are saying. The meanest, most indelicate action——”

“Don't be serious! I'm not there. I only meant I would frighten her. Surely no lady would be capable of trying to encourage——”

“No, no, no!” exclaimed Mrs. Elmore, hastily passing on to the letter, and reading its concluding words.

“Dell's lines have not fallen in pleasant places,” said Mary. “What are you going to do, mamma?”

“Do?” echoed Mrs. Elmore, vaguely, the troubled lines appearing on her brow, that made the sweet face look so careworn and

sad. "Do ? She has just gone. I would not have had her go. She will know better than I when she has time to——"

"She cannot," said Mary, decisively. "It would never occur to her that she should not stay. She ought not to stay—certainly not there. And she can go nowhere else."

"Indeed, I think you are right. But understand, I don't want to take an unfair advantage. Any position would have been awkward for her. Another week may bring things to a different termination."

"That I can quite believe," said Mary, emphatically.

Poor Mrs. Elmore ! She felt herself thoroughly unfit to take any movement at all. Things were changed. With all the chickens under her wing, and no interlopers, she had been mistress of the situation. But every day since that singular accident to Vivian Seymour she had felt her authority slipping out of her hands. She was painfully aware that Mary seemed more fit to grasp



the case than she herself. Again, this confident tone was new to her from either daughter. They had looked to her for advice ; now Mary gave it.

"I shall let the matter rest," said Mrs. Elmore, in a dignified manner.

"It is not safe," murmured Mary ; but she said no more.

Certainly this girl had most peculiar characteristics. Gentle and quiet as a dove, and yet, as her mother was beginning to recognize, stronger than either when her power asserted itself.

Mrs. Elmore was very unhappy. Like all people who depend entirely upon themselves, and accept no other guidance, she began to feel the disturbing doubt of her own action, that was in itself almost a conviction of wrong. She did not tell herself that it was morbid conscientiousness. No ; the fact was she had been deplorably weak in allowing Adelaide to go. She seemed to feel a shadowy fear that Mary, who had

hitherto been so passive, would soon be able to take all power from her. And just before her was Kate, the warm impulsive woman, with the child-nature, in all the overpowering charm of her beauty. Here was another difficulty. She had fallen into mute dreamy ways, and only occasionally started out with her sharp play of words and childlike mirth. Of course, she must be a woman one day.

With a long-drawn sigh the mother's meditations were interrupted. It was by a low deep voice and a strong tender hand. Mary leant upon her shoulder.

“We must take care of you. You are looking ill. You have taken care of me quite long enough; it's time, mother dear, I should be of some use to you. You can trust me, can't you? Look into my eyes!” And the girl came round in front, and fixed those calm still orbs upon her mother's almost shrinking face. “Why should you torment yourself about us? You can trust us all. You know Dell; you can have no fear for her.”

“You — *you*, Mary——” began Mrs. Elmore, hesitating.

“I have no fear. You mistake me. I only wish to prevent annoyance to her. Nothing can harm Dell.”

“Oh, Mary!” cried the mother, bursting into tears; “how I wish I could feel the confidence you feel in yourselves!”

“You should. You have made us what we are. There is not one of us who would not die for you. There is not one of us who ever had a faithless thought. And remember, no one can do us a *real* injury. We can only *injure* ourselves.”

It was unusual for Mary to speak so warmly. Kate woke up to the fact, and from her reverie at the same moment. She started from her seat, aware that her absent mind had been sinning.

“That is true!” she cried, and her voice, when she was touched, thrilled with an indescribable pathos; “it is *all* true. We would rather die than deceive you, or pain you. Trust us—and be at rest.”

There was hardly a demand for this excitement, for those glittering unshed tears. Mary noted her sister's absorbed enthusiasm. "It has more than one meaning," she thought.

Then Kate and her mother wept for a moment in sweet unison. And after the caress, there was a pause. The quiet of reaction set in, and Mary was gratified.

"I think it would not be advisable to mention any details about Dell to Colonel Bathurst when he calls," said Mrs. Elmore, presently, having doubts of Kate's discretion on this point.

"It will make things no better, and it cannot possibly make them worse, whatever we may say," said Mary, with quiet persistence. "Still, mother dear, we shall obey you, of course."

Poor mother! The ambiguous sentence in its confusing reserve was hardly soothing to her.

## CHAPTER VII.

## WORLDLY EXPERIENCE.

ADELAIDE spent very little time at the vicarage, and when there she generally retired to her own room to read or write, in preference to remaining with Mr. Wallis and his wife. His cringing humility of manner displeased her much, and the frequent caresses that took place between the ill-suited pair displeased her still more. Having so many reasons for wishing to be alone, excuses were not difficult to find. So, in spite of Mr. Wallis's importunities, she managed to spend every spare hour in solitary confinement.

From day to day she never looked upon a face she loved, nor exchanged one familiar

word. Night after night she sat up reading until midnight, or even later, in order that she might not have to pass long dreary hours in sleeplessness.

She could not but admit to herself that she had fallen into a most unfortunate position, for she soon found the hard-working little curate had merely hinted at the eccentricities of Mr. Wallis and his wife. He had meant well, she saw that now, and was kind accordingly ; for she infinitely preferred to go to him for instructions than to Mr. Wallis, who did not converse on parochial affairs, but who rather avoided them, and talked in a vaguely complimentary way that was quite unpleasant to her.

His manner was always obsequious, that was imitating ; sometimes paternal, that was offensive ; and sometimes affectionate, that was revolting. Adelaide's cold brief replies did not discourage him. He would wait about the hall to speak to her in passing. One morning she saw that he intended to



accompany her. Experiencing that strange shudder of repulsion which comes of instinctive dislike, she made an effort to dispose of her unwelcome companion. She returned his greeting formally, and then said—

“Mr. Hazel is waiting in the schoolroom. I must ask you to excuse me.”

“Hazel is accustomed to wait—ahem!—for *me*,” he said. “And to-day it is my desire to introduce you to a new district. Among my multifarious duties I must not neglect you. It is only right our poor should see me occasionally by your side. My presence will prove a protection to you——”

Unconsciously Adelaide drew herself a step farther off.

“Indeed, I am perfectly capable of taking care of myself,” she said, stiffly.

“My dear young lady, that might not be always so. With—hem!—personal attractions—such as yours——”

“Excuse me,” she said, abruptly, “no-

body has once mentioned my personal attractions but yourself."

This reply, delivered as it was half angrily, and rather as though she resented the possession of any "attractions," might have proved a check to any other man. But the vicar was not sensitive, and he did not understand this beautiful, dignified girl in the least.

"No one, however, can be blind to them," he said fawningly, with his specious smile.

Her instinctive prejudice was so strong at this moment that she actually began to fear this man at her side. Her heart gave quite a throb of delight as she recognized Mr. Hazel approaching.

Good breeding may be one thing, and human nature may sometimes be quite another. It was so in this case. Adelaide's courtesy and care for the feelings of others quite deserted her.

"I would prefer to spend the morning with some one who has sufficient taste to

appear blind," she said, with cold contempt.

"I am going with Mr. Hazel."

She gave a certain ominous flash from those expressive eyes, which Mr. Wallis acknowledged by a smile that was evidently meant to be seductive.

"Good morning, Miss Elmore," said the timid curate, endeavouring to hide his own nervousness and his surprise at the same time. "I have been waiting to deliver a message to you, and—and I am fortunate in meeting you."

"I think so too," said Adelaide, kindly. "I am going your way, Mr. Hazel;" and, bestowing a passing recognition of the most indescribable kind upon the vicar, she turned away.

The poor little man's voice fairly trembled as he proceeded to state that Mrs. Furnival, the rich and influential philanthropist of Grimslade, had expressed a strong desire to be introduced to the young lady who had commenced her career so bravely.

“How did she know anything about me?” inquired Adelaide.

“It was I—who spoke of you. Forgive me, but—knowing how you stand alone here, and—knowing Mrs. Furnival as I do, I *hope* you will forgive the liberty.”

Adelaide stopped his halting speech with such a radiant smile that he felt more nervous than ever.

“Thank you,” she said, warmly; “I shall be very glad to know Mrs. Furnival.”

\* \* \* \*

It was with quite a pleasurable feeling that Adelaide sought the desired interview. Her surroundings were altogether of so repulsive a nature that the mere change could but be a relief.

As she walked through this part of Grims-lade, which was new to her, her spirits rose, she breathed more freely. Could it be, she asked herself, that she was appreciating the clearer atmosphere of this wide, clean street and the distant glimpse of country? She

had been reared in the midst of natural beauty, and she was depressed by the loathsome ugliness she had found here.

Situated in a prominent position, just outside the town, stood the mansion in which Mrs. Furnival resided. Adelaide had never seen such a place as the interior of this great house, with its ponderous richness of decoration, and all its costly surroundings.

She was shown into a spacious apartment, that appeared to be arranged for the purposes of a public meeting or concert. Immediately, however, a servant, in gorgeous livery, led her to a comfortable library, where a lady sat writing.

Mrs. Furnival gave a quick glance at her visitor, saying, "May I ask you to wait? I must despatch this letter by the next post. Be seated, pray."

Adelaide merely bowed. Then, passing the chair facing the writing-table, she sat down at a distant window and took up a periodical.

The lady gave one more rapid glance at her visitor, and then continued her work. She was an uncommon woman in every respect. She was dressed plainly, indeed carelessly. She wore no ornaments of any kind. Her brown dress was of ordinary home-spun cloth, and did not fit her fairly proportioned figure. She was not sufficiently well dressed for an imposing woman of middle age; one might have taken her to be a secretary, but not the influential Mrs. Furnival.

In less than five minutes she had finished her letter, which was systematically set aside with others, - which she counted before summoning the gorgeous menial, and directing that they should be posted at once. After this she drew her chair near Adelaide, and said pleasantly, in a rapid sharp way—

“I hope you didn’t mind waiting?”

“Do not apologize. I have not had time to discover that I was waiting.”

Adelaide put down her book and looked



at the heavily lined face, with its rather clumsy features and dark horizontal eyebrows, with some interest.

"You are Mrs. Furnival," she said politely, after a slight pause.

"Yes. Did you take me to be a servant?" Her voice was harsh, but very kindly. There was not a dash of humour in the question. "Don't mind admitting it; people often think so."

"I had not formed any opinion."

"Ah! I always form one with my first glance, though I think it a great advantage to be able to defer one's conclusions. I reckoned you up instantaneously."

Adelaide smiled.

"That was a very incredulous smile! I don't presume to details; but, although I did not hear your voice, I saw at once by your deportment and dress that you were of a different order from most ladies who undertake our parish work. I don't think it shows any great perspicacity to discover

what a woman is when she goes out among the poor with a bonnet covered with flowers, lace, and feathers—enough to make a dozen. To make a digression on this particular bonnet, I was told that it was *French*.” It would be impossible to describe the amount of contempt thrown into that one word. “Do you happen to know if that is the style of bonnet worn in France just now?”

“I have not the slightest idea,” said Adelaide, earnestly.

“Then you deserve the esteem of all sensible people; many women know nothing else! I don’t think I was wrong in my estimate of you.” The lady paused, fixing her acute light-grey eyes upon her visitor, and bringing those heavy brows lower in the process of investigating. “You must have been subject to exceptional training. Don’t imagine, please, that I blame women for their interest in French bonnets. Poor things! if they’re well off, they’ve little else to interest

them. For myself, I was brought up in that abominable age that kept young girls principally engaged in 'fancy' work. Fancy work! It was a singular fancy that invented it."

"We always call it 'lazy' work, its only use being to occupy the hands while talking."

"It is play—nothing more. I do not object to artistic work, for by that means many a woman can gain an honest livelihood. It is the vapidty of doing nothing and making it an occupation that I object to. It is demoralizing. You have not been long in Grimslade?"

"A very short time."

"Long enough to discover whether the work suits you?"

"I—I hardly know," replied Adelaide, slowly. Then she added with quick enthusiasm, "But if it were a thousand times worse than it is, I should do it."

Now Mrs. Furnival smiled. The smile transformed her face. "I like that," she

said. "But it isn't at all wise. *I* don't think you're at all suited to the work."

"I shall have to get accustomed to it, then. I don't suppose any woman could go into an entirely strange position and feel herself quite suitable. What I have set before myself as a duty I shall certainly perform."

"You need take no pains to assure me you are not half-hearted; but I know more about these things than you do. I have not your refinement by nature, but I have probably an equal strength of purpose. Still, *I* found it impossible to do the work. I have no artistic taste; I don't think the highest beauty has much charm for me, but I detest dirt as much as I love purity. I abhor disorder just as I appreciate order. Besides, it is all disappointment. The very minds with which you come in contact are those that cannot be influenced by rules which govern your own. Perhaps I am unsympathetic. What are you doing?"

“I fear I am at a disadvantage,” said Adelaide, modestly. “There is much illness at present, I am told, and I can give more valuable assistance in nursing than anything else. But having had no experience, I find my theories sadly at fault. You cannot learn to nurse the sick entirely from a book, any more than you can learn to cook from one. Cooking is my speciality. I *know* I could do some good in that direction.”

“Indeed?” exclaimed Mrs. Furnival, with warm interest. “I don’t know anything about it myself, but I do know something about food, and I know that the poor eat the wrong food, and their children don’t get nourished. I have set up—let me see—five shops in their midst, where they can buy good brown bread at even a lower price than they can get the ordinary white loaf.” She stopped and smiled again. “I’m told I am ruining the bakers. I received a deputation last night. What am I to do? I offer to set the bakers on their legs in this fashion—

‘Learn to make good brown bread,’ I said, ‘and I will close my shops, or I’ll buy your fittings.’ The unfortunate thing is, you can’t help one class without injuring another. Now, it is the same with the co-operative stores I am attempting to found. I met with opposition on all sides, even from the clergy. ‘You would ruin the commercial interests of the country,’ they said. But—God bless all His creatures—are we to let our helpless ones starve to keep up the commercial interests of a country?” Mrs. Furnival paused oratorically.

Thinking an answer was expected, Adelaide, with her large grave eyes fixed with ever-growing interest on the strong emotional face, said, “I really don’t think I ought to give an opinion on politics.”

“Perhaps you think you don’t understand politics. If you like, I’ll teach you in ten minutes that you do. Why, women understand the very root and soul of politics. But they don’t know it themselves, and so



the assumption is that they don't understand. Consider: man is universally trained to do one thing only, and that one thing well—if he can. Women (we don't count those who do not work; they are in the minority), whether they are trained or not, have to do many kinds of work, to perform many functions, to organize and associate ends and means. Man, calmly and deliberately, builds up his house brick by brick; but when he has built it, it's no good to him. It's the woman alone who can govern it. And I tell you quite seriously—and it is according to some of the highest authorities too—that woman was intended to govern it. In my opinion, the time has come when she will not be kept out of her position by all the French bonnets in Europe."

"I have read in one of Professor Ruskin's works——"

"Ah! you mustn't think we've quite arrived at that yet. He is a full century before his time. Work among us for a

while, and you'll see what I see—that it is utterly hopeless to do anything for the people of this country while the women live in subordination and have no power to act. Why, we take better care of our criminals than we do of our deserving poor. A great factory fails here, or a great man retires from the field of his speculations, gluttoned. The men and women who have worked half their lives—perhaps nearly all their working years—for the acquisition of this great end are thrown upon the world—hundreds sometimes in one small town alone. Have they no rights, do you think?”

“Oh, it seems to me they surely have.”

“They have none. You know our politicians are too much occupied with ‘foreign affairs, and the manufacturing of party cries, and passing—suppose we say ‘complimentary’—remarks upon each other, to notice such common matters as the housing of our poor, though they die by hundreds, or of our workhouses, within the gates of

which our able-bodied paupers tear off their clothing—don't be incredulous ; I am stating a fact—and our old men and children wait outside for admission. Do you think if women had the management of domestic affairs they would allow this ? Dear me, Miss Elmore, what am I doing ? I wanted to see you upon your own especial business."

"Go on, pray."

The obvious interest in Adelaide's eyes and attitude was not to be mistaken.

"I wish some of my audiences could be all like you," Mrs. Furnival said with a laugh. "I can't help being warm ! If you knew how I abhor dirt, disease, and hunger ! Such things should not exist. In a properly organized community they could not exist. But we can hope for nothing better while our legislators spend their time upon foreign policy and fume over immaterial personal disputes. Home and social questions will never receive their just share of consideration until women have some part in the

government of a country in which they are, unfortunately, in the majority. What do you think of your first lesson in politics ?”

“ Well, I could not venture—— ”

“ You will soon venture. Every one with mind to form an opinion should give it. I am indignant when I hear it said that women would talk too much to be of any use ! Why, men,” continued Mrs. Furnival, forcibly—“ men are *all* talk ! How many of our legislators care for the people, do you think ? Generally speaking, who does care for the people—their rights, their wrongs, their prosperity, or their misery ? Men care for their reputation as orators, for their consistent adherence to party, for the vulgar and common ambition of place. But who, among the hundreds who attempt to govern, has that lofty aim, that grand ambition to benefit the people, to help the man who cannot help himself, to speak for the man who cannot speak for himself ? ”

“I cannot believe in such low desires in men holding such onerous positions?”

“My dear girl—But you are charmingly consistent. Perhaps you think I am not, holding such opinions and living as I do? I am obeying the injunctions of my late husband. He and I held very different opinions. All my large property after my death will go to the museum. I, believing in the actual wants of the people, am resolved to live as long as possible, and spend my income my own way. I work from strong conviction, and not from a spirit of opposition. He was an earnest man, an advanced Liberal, and a Nonconformist. He did not see that in keeping a herd of servants, and keeping up a palace at unnecessary expense, he was imitating the errors of the lords whom he despised. I bow to his wish. I would not dispense with an inch of plush on a servant, although I would not wear it myself.”

“That is not inconsistent,” said Ade-

laide, warmly; "it is simply conscientious."

Mrs. Furnival smiled; and when she smiled she was a very lovable woman, and not an orator.

"It is not every Radical who professes to believe in equality, who treats men as though they were his equals. If any one man requires luxury, then all men require it. I believe luxury is the ruin of men. I believe in greater simplicity of life among the upper and middle classes. As to the working poor, they are miserable. They want light, clean houses. They cannot have them. They want amusement—sometimes, let it be presumed—and they can't afford it. They want music they can understand. They want a short dramatic entertainment—not a theatrical speculation arranged with an eye to the proprietor's profits, and pandering to depraved tastes. They want always a bit of common—an open space—a winter house, or garden, where



they can meet and exchange a word with a friend without having to drink unlimited glasses of bad spirits for the sake of society: Well, I won't lecture you any more. I'll wait and see what you discover for yourself." Adelaide now rose. "Not yet." Mrs. Furnival arose also, but she continued talking rapidly. "Now, as soon as you have done with the nursing, come to me. I'll give you a room for the cooking lessons, and I'll give you the provisions also. There's a great deal of talk on the subject just now—one of our princes has, I see, been taking it up; but the real truth is, these people want food first to cook, and then they want somewhere to cook it. But we shall be ready for you some day; you are only like Mr. Ruskin, a little before your time. You are staying at the vicarage, I believe? I don't know much about Mr. Wallis." Adelaide thought that might be as well for Mr. Wallis. "I have, however, a firm supporter in the rector. Will you stay and have some lunch with me?"

“Thank you, I cannot stay. I have promised to take a whole family under my charge this morning. There are two children with the fever, and there is a baby six weeks old. No one has volunteered to help, and the mother, a widow, is too poor to pay for assistance. I shall do my best; but I know I should be afraid to touch the baby—it is so small!”

“Poor creature! I know the case. The father died of the fever a week or two since. Go, and prosper! Don’t let them want for anything. Apply to me without reserve. Must you really go? Well, I am sorry. You were looking at the ‘Modern Mystic.’ Take this number; there is an excellent article in it that I should like you to read. By-the-bye, I’ll send some pamphlets and papers on to you, if you will allow me—things that can be destroyed.”

“Thank you. Yes; I shall be glad of them. I have read the article you mention. The writer appears to be a very strong

advocate for woman—even in her weakest aspect.”

“Aye; and it is under her weakest aspect that she is most unjustly treated. That is a noble essay, Miss Elmore. It is written by a gentleman whom I have never seen, although he is a strong supporter of the claims of our sex to the justice they deserve. I should like to meet Colonel Bathurst——”

“Colonel Bathurst!”

“Yes; do you know him? He always signs initials. That’s right; take the book. I’m very sorry you must go.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

## KATE'S QUESTIONS.

“ ‘ I AM getting much interested in my work ’ (wrote Adelaide), ‘ although it is not that which I had designed for myself. At present I am on the “ sick list ; ” for there is so much illness just now that I am assured I can best help in this way.

“ ‘ Last week I was introduced to a lady of enormous wealth, who is much interested in Grimslade. She gives large sums to the poor, and has, in fact, dedicated her life to the people. She quite fascinates me. I don’t think I ever heard any one talk so earnestly and with so much power. We have such long conversations, and Mrs. Furnival takes strong interest in my scheme for a school of cookery ;

but she does not approve of me for the work. "There are thousands of women who are more suitable for such occupations, and you are wasted in them," she said. It is perfectly true that I am unsuited. Would it be wrong to say I am too sensitive? All people must be sensitive to misery, more or less. I have been amazed at the amount of bluntness I encounter—a sort of dull apathy that seems to accept pain as a normal condition. I hope, in one sense, I am right, and that there is not so much suffering as one might expect. On the other hand, such a hope seems an insult to human nature. Perhaps I shall get accustomed to all this in time. My inexperience is sadly against me, for it is one thing to read of horrors and another thing to see them. One must possess literally that faith which removes mountains before one could move the mass of apathetic ignorance I have before me. My own ideas were Arcadian compared to this. Oh, there is endless ugliness and misery in this

beautiful world of ours that I never dreamt of! What has man been about to allow the splendour of God's gifts to be hidden by such squalid dens, and humanity itself to be degraded below the level of the brute? Would women, do you think, overlook the higher beauties of life in the eternal pursuit of mere possession? Perhaps Colonel Bathurst is right—we do require women to help us to govern our people, as we require men to treat with foreign powers, and to fight with them if necessary.

“‘Enough of the serious; I am getting saturated with Mrs. Furnival's ideas. Oh, Mrs. Wallis is terrible! Yesterday I spent the evening in their sitting-room by Mr. Wallis's request. Can you believe that she once sat upon his knee, and that he had his arm round her waist with all the coolness of native indelicacy? I can't say I felt embarrassed. I was sorry for them, and rather angry.’”

Here Mrs. Elmore stopped. She had read



this part very rapidly, and, to say the truth, felt an awkward desire to stop. But Mary and Kate would read the letter over and over again, she knew.

“Go on!” laughed Kate. “What did she do next?”

With a slightly raised colour Mrs. Elmore continued. “‘Fortunately, we have had the advantage of your training. You have taken care that we should have access to the best literature, therefore by that I am able to judge fairly of the manners and customs of society. It strikes me Mr. Wallis is paying very heavy interest for his wife’s money.’”

“Mamma, she *must* leave them!” exclaimed Mary, in a tone of contemptuous anger.

“She has to deal with the world,” said Mrs. Elmore, quietly. “You have said yourself she cannot be harmed.”

“But go on!”

“‘Now, for Kate’s satisfaction. She knows

I have no time to write to you separately. Tell her I shall answer six questions only at a time. She must remember there is no royal road to knowledge. I have to work out the answers. First : Yes. I suppose a woman who paints her face *could* be a lady, but certainly not when she is painted out of all imitation of nature, and serves only to attract vulgar attention ; still, I have a doubt on the point. Second : I have been in company with many ladies, at lectures, meetings, churches. I have had ample opportunity of satisfying myself that not one in fifty has what the Frenchman calls “tusks.” It has long been a habit of that politest of nations to caricature English women to a libellous extent. Mouths variously deform are, no doubt, to be found all over Europe as well as in England. A beautiful mouth will always be a rare thing, because it invariably expresses a beautiful character. Third : Men are certainly more agreeable than women—to women. I’m

not sure that all women might find it so. If this answer is not intelligible, read it again. Fourth : Yes. On the average, men are more sincere than women, but they are not equally refined. Perhaps feminine delicacy is an enemy to coarse honesty. Fifth : Oh no ! Colonel Bathurst is greatly superior to ordinary men.' ”

Here Mrs. Elmore dropped the letter in her lap. “What nonsense can you have been writing, Kate ?”

The girl shook her head and looked demure. “I thought I should like to get some knowledge of the world second hand. I only asked if most men were as handsome and as pleasant and as well-bred as the colonel. And she says ‘Oh no ! He is greatly superior to ordinary men.’ Capital ! And she knows, perhaps, three or four ; but she answers emphatically.”

“And I think she is quite right,” said Mrs. Elmore, sedately.

This was the only comment she ventured.

She left the letter on the table, and went away ; the matter was altogether too unpleasant for general conversation. She felt sure that a climax would soon arrive, and this frivolous, foolish woman would find her jealousy roused with regard to Adelaide.

Mr. Wallis was unmarried when she knew him, and she had naturally drawn the picture of his homestead upon the familiar lines of her own experience. She knew this was not the type of woman to expect in a clergyman's wife, so she could hardly blame herself for error. Still, the whole thing was discouraging—everything was discouraging from first to last. There was no future hope of happiness for those daughters of hers ; and she knew it. Oh, if they had only been boys ! But perhaps in that case they might have proved still more unmanageable ; for they could not have been kept in seclusion, and *they* would have inevitably fallen in love, if only with a milk-maid.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A BOYISH INDISCRETION.

“HAVEN’T seen you for three days, except at breakfast, Bathurst. But I don’t grumble. I manage to amuse myself.”

“Yes, yes,” said the colonel, hastily, “I see that.”

“Well, there’s nothing like accommodating yourself to circumstances, *I* say. By the way, that’s what I was doing the first and only time I was ever overtaken. It was after a review at Aldershot. There was plenty of brandy, I recollect, but no water. However, I remember mixing a little sherry with mine, just to soften it ; and that’s about all I do recollect.”

“Circumstances did not, however, ac-

commodate themselves to you," laughed the colonel, adding soberly, "I believe they seldom do."

"Talk of that, the most extraordinary thing that ever happened to me—at Hastings it was—did I ever tell ye my adventure with Patty Ford? She was an old love of mine, but married on this occasion."

"For the occasion only?" asked Bathurst, with indifference. "Yes—I've heard—of them all—I think. You are so erratic in your erotics that I get confused. Pardon, there's Mrs. Grove, who has some communication to make. I shall be back soon."

The major beguiled the time during his host's absence in various ways. He looked at the supplement of the *Times* in an absent frame of mind; he sharpened a pencil, and drew abnormal outlines of the human countenance on the margin, uttering an occasional exclamation when he discovered an accidental likeness to an acquaintance.

He looked up with the most perfect un-



concern as Bathurst entered the room after awhile, with rather a grim aspect and an angry stride.

“ You look down in the mouth, Bathurst. Has she refused you ? ”

“ I’m not in the humour for pleasantries of that kind. I’ve just heard that which is intensely annoying to me—that you spent yesterday evening in insulting my maids.”

“ Me ! ” exclaimed O’Buncous, starting from his seat in genuine amazement. “ Why, I never assaulted a woman in my life, except that laundress I was telling you of.”

“ Hang the laundress ! What do you call an insult, I should like to know ? ”

“ Well, there’s many things,” began O’Buncous, in a measured undertone, taking the colonel literally—“ there’s many things I could mention, but ” (with a happy flash of thought) “ that’s not so much to the purpose as what *you* consider an insult. I’m as innocent of *intention*, Bathurst, as you are

yourself !” And O’Buncous extended his hands and spread out his capacious chest to prove his immaculate condition.

“Are you going to profess to be so deucedly innocent that you don’t know it’s an insult to kiss a respectable girl against her will ?”

O’Buncous listened attentively to the stern sarcastic demand. He showed simply the warmth of self-defence as he answered excitedly, “Just the words—the very words a fool of an old Yorkshire magistrate used to me, when I kissed the parson’s daughter, going through a hayfield. I’d got it on the tip of my tongue to ask him what he was made of, and whether he had ever kissed a girl. But one look of him was enough to prove that he’d forgotten it, if ever he had, and, Bathurst. I could only pity the poor devil.”

“This is evasion, O’Buncous !” exclaimed Bathurst, pacing the room angrily. “You must be serious. These girls in my house are under my protection.”

“All of ’em? I say, you have got a handful.”

“Can’t you see I’m earnest?” said Bathurst, getting excited.

“Yes; a precious sight too earnest! You remind me to a T of that old muff in Yorkshire. But, after all, I’ve no cause to grumble. The whole affair only cost me a shilling.”

“If it cost you no shame, it was a pity,” said Bathurst, with rising wrath. “These girls are in my charge, and I insist upon their being treated with proper respect.”

“Now, I put it to you, old fellow,” said O’Buncous, in a tender explanatory tone. “*Do* you think such a thing’s *new* to the girls? I’ve always held it to be a matter of honour to notice a pretty girl, and they like it. Though they sometimes make a fuss, they like it all the same.”

“That is entirely apart from the question whether they like it or not. The thing has unfortunately happened. I am very sorry,

in my own house, O'Buncous, to make anything unpleasant ; but my honour is at stake. I can't let the thing pass."

"What shall I do? Do tell me. I'll go down on my knees to the whole lot! I didn't know things were so serious. I'll tell 'em what you like, but I'll swear I won't say I intended to insult 'em! 'That,' I shall say, 'is your grand master's idea of a man he's known since he was a boy——'"

"It was all very well when you were a boy——"

"My heart's as fresh as ever; I've lost nothing up to the present time—but the small of my back. That's wider than it was, and how the deuce a thing can be said to be lost when its power is increased passes my comprehension. It's the same with the heart. When a man's in love, he's supposed to have lost his heart, when it's only increased to an inconvenient size. It's a poetical licence."

Bathurst here interrupted sternly, "I

wish you would not prevaricate. Mrs. Grove very properly represented the matter to me, and, I regret to say, the girl you favoured with your delicate attention has been much offended."

"Ah! that's the one with the black hair and the blue eyes. I'll warrant, now, the other gipsy that laughed so heartily didn't complain! Did she now?"

"Whether she complained or not, Mrs. Grove has resolved to dismiss her for her lightness."

"Light she is, by George! though I don't see why you should dismiss her for it. A pretty dance she led me before I could catch her; and I don't believe I ever should if she hadn't laughed so much."

"I grant she had enough to laugh at," said Bathurst, with angry scorn. "An old man pursuing a girl who might be his granddaughter—but it is not for her I have any concern; it is for the timid, gentle girl who has been crying her eyes out."



“I told her ’twas a pity to spoil ’em, I did indeed, Bathurst!” exclaimed O’Buncous, looking a very picture of dismay, and shaking his head in mournful despondency over the whole affair, as though he himself stood quite outside it.

But not the wildest absurdity on the part of his “old friend” would have provoked a smile on the colonel’s face just then. His features were stern and rigid, as he demanded fiercely that O’Buncous should have the manliness to go at once and apologize for his indiscretion in the presence of Mrs. Grove and himself.

“My dear fellow!” exclaimed O’Buncous, heartily, “I’ll do it with the greatest pleasure. A man only increases his self-respect, and adds magnanimity to his other virtues, when he apologizes to a female. I never did knuckle down to a member of my own sex. But there——”

The colonel was not listening.



## CHAPTER X.

## THE SECRET IS OUT.

“THIS is an old friend,” grumbled Bathurst to himself, as he reflected on the major’s indiscretions. “When our old friends don’t advance with age, we must either go back or—cut them.”

He began to see that it would be difficult to get rid of O’Buncous, and yet he would fain have been clear of him. Altogether the state of things was perplexing. He was becoming scrupulous to the last degree, as it concerned those ladies at the Glade, and was conscious of an irritating anxiety as to what O’Buncous might do next. Old friendship, he was ready to assert, was a snare and a delusion.

“Old friends!” again grumbled the colonel. “We don’t know how to choose friends when we are young. It’s a matter of accident then whether an acquaintance will end as a friend or not. I wish he would go! It’s no use hinting; I must resort to diplomacy.”

Then he dismissed the subject, and reverted to several unopened letters, with a sigh of general dissatisfaction.

“Ah! Reilly’s hand, or I’m much mistaken. *He* wouldn’t write if he’d nothing to say.” And he opened the letter.

“DEAR BATHURST,

“I hasten to let you know that I have made a discovery which will be of as much interest to you as it is to me. Captain Elmore, I hear from my father, died in an asylum. He had been insane for some time. This sets aside my theory of monomania, and accounts for everything. Mrs. Elmore’s conduct is not only rational, but high

principled. Her sense of duty is part of her conscientious nature, and her difficulty is greatly increased by the beauty and intelligence of her daughters, being, as they are, so ably fitted to play their part in this contradictory world of ours. My half-formed plans are entirely shattered, and I don't mind admitting to you that, having more personal interest in the family at the Glade than I knew, this news has thoroughly disconcerted me. I have had scarcely time to receive the truth, so firmly was my first idea fixed. Both Mrs. Elmore and her husband were, I find, highly esteemed and admired. But this fact serves only to aggravate the conditions. Of course, you will see with me there is no way out of it. Destroy my disjointed scrawl.

“Faithfully yours,

“A. H. REILLY.

“P.S.—Address here until next week, if you have anything to say. Has your nephew gone yet? *Take care of him.*”

Bathurst sat in gloomy silence, staring at the letter, although he had read every word carefully twice over. Yes, certainly, it was all clear enough—too clear to suit his taste. There was no doubt about its being one of those mysterious difficulties that seemed to be invented only to confuse man's reason and moral feeling. Reilly expressed not the faintest doubt as to the propriety of Mrs. Elmore's action, and that, of course, implied his approval. He had, too, admitted that he had not known the strength of his own interest. And here Bathurst could truly sympathize. He had hardly known the strength of his own interest until the present moment, when his case was hopeless.

"As to Vin," he muttered, "it's as well that he has gone. As it is, I may be able to avoid an explanation. I wonder how far he is concerned? Luckily he's young, and"—with a sigh—"I'm too old to pass the matter off by a sleepless night or two, and begin afresh with the next pretty girl who

strikes me. Psha ! what bosh I am talking ! Bah ! ”

No ; such light faithlessness was utterly outside the character of this man, who once only in his youth had loved and lost. The girl had died of an insidious disease while quite young, and the secret had been ever his own. Perhaps it was the purity of this attachment that had made him dead to the attractions of women for many years of his life. He had spoken the truth when he told Vivian that mind alone could influence or attract him, and he knew now, to his extreme discomfiture, how it had attracted him.

“ Now, here comes O’Buncous—as if I were not ill-humoured enough already ! ”

The major came in whistling, and looking the personification of careless boyhood.

“ A beautiful morning, Bathurst ! Aren’t you going out ? ”

“ I don’t know what you call a beautiful morning. ”

“Well—for the time of year. November isn’t brilliant, usually.”

“Yes; the autumn is over,” said Bathurst, reflectively, “and our manœuvres are over with it.”

This was the style of allusion that might be taken up, he thought. And it was.

“Faith, no! speak for yourself, me boy! What a providential thing my coming down here was! There was a fate in it. I’m not superstitious, Bathurst, as you know; but from the moment I told you I was cock-sure that Fate was keeping me for something devilishly good, I’ve been—that is, I’ve known all about it.”

“Well, I’m glad you’ve had a pleasant time! considering—a few little drawbacks—necessary obstacles—ahem!”

Here Bathurst’s thoughts, unfortunately, reverted to the circumstances that had not been “necessary” on the part of his free and easy old friend.

“I’ve always held marriage to be essential



to a man," O'Buncous continued, with an air of seriousness. "What a loss to go through half one's life without the 'music of a woman's smile to light the—pipe!' No; it can't be that."

"Ah, I thought the metaphor was getting confused myself. As you say, you want stir—action. My quiet humdrum life, now I am alone, doesn't suit you."

"Oh, don't mention it. I'm perfectly happy—at least, that is, I should be; there's no doubt I *shall* be. But women are ticklish cattle. How can I be dull, Bathurst, when all my future happiness is at stake?"

"I sincerely hope not," said the colonel, whose mind during this rambling speech had wandered from the subject.

The word "insane" to his mind bore such a terrible meaning. And when he conjured up the image of that beautiful woman, Adelaide Elmore, in all her genuine understanding, he could not bring himself

to believe that the madness of every ancestor she possessed could affect her calm, clear intelligence.

“ Ah, Bathurst, there’s a moral deficiency in you. You don’t soar to the height of the highest passion of the heart of man ; you’re incapable of it. Gad ! it’s like the loadstone—brought within a certain distance there is no alternative. Man has no choice but to clasp—to unite with the beloved object—— ”

“ Deuced awkward for the women, that theory of yours. She might be married, you know, or she might object.”

“ Object ? Oh ! women always object. According to my experience, that’s the game they play. I’m more serious than ever I was in my life. I’m completely saturated—if I may use the expression ; it’s the strongest I can think of.”

“ If you really mean me to take you seriously,” said Bathurst, waking up to an unpleasant sense of another difficulty, “ let

me beg of you—I trust you have not been precipitate——”

“Precipitate is it?” O’Buncous threw up his hands as he made the exclamation, as though the word were an absurdity.

“Well, you must excuse me if I am blunt, but I scarcely expected you really meant——” Then he paused, a frown gathering upon his even brow. Rising, he strode hastily up and down, speaking as rapidly as he walked. It was his manner when moved to anger. “If you are thinking of any woman here, it must be of Kate Elmore. Surely you cannot be mad enough to conceive that you have a chance with her?”

“And why not?” O’Buncous raised his eyebrows, his round black orbs distended to their widest limits, his short arms thrown back, his protuberant waistcoat more protuberant by the attitude. “Why not? Is it the contemptible question of age you’re thinking of? A man is just as old as he

feels ! And, Bathurst, do you know how old Juliet was ? ”

“How old Juliet was ? ” echoed the colonel, wondering why he had never heard of her before.

“Ah ! I thought you didn’t know,” exclaimed O’Buncous, triumphantly. “Well, she was fourteen.”

“Well, I can’t see what that has to do with it.”

“My lord, you’ve got no logic—nor love either. Why, don’t you see, if she was fourteen, there’s nothing to prevent anybody else—as a woman. I want to show you age has nothing to do with it, and I bring Shakespeare to prove it. You say he was always right.”

“Shakespeare ? Oh ! ah ! Juliet. Well, but Romeo wasn’t fifty.”

“Falstaff must have been—quite ; so there you are ! Not that I’m going to say that Shakespeare should dictate to me. I know my own feelings better than any

man can tell me.” And he shook his head despondently, and his puffy cheeks shook too.

“All I hope is that you will have sufficient discretion not to approach that young lady with a word of love. In her youth and inexperience——”

“Was Juliet inexperienced? Did she go teaching? You wouldn’t ask the question if you’d got it in your own nature. Marguerite was younger still if I——”

“Your argument is all damned nonsense!” and at this Bathurst’s strides became longer.

“Oh! of course you think so. I’m prepared for that,” said O’Buncous, shrugging his shoulders with the air of a man much misunderstood. “You cannot sympathize; but I implore you, by the memory of our old friendship, not to spoil my chance.”

“It would be next to murder,” said the colonel, sarcastically. “You’d die of a broken heart.”

O'Buncous did not see the sarcasm. He put on a look that was positively comical in his desire to appear pathetic. Bathurst caught it, and, even in the midst of his annoyance, could not forbear to laugh. It was altogether such a hopeless case to deal with the man; he seemed so wofully irresponsible for his own ridiculous vanity, that the contest could but seem unfair.

"I beg you, anyhow, to be careful, for my sake. Don't propose to her," said he, sternly.

"Come, now! this is too bad," said the other, appealingly. "Too bad! Do I ever mention the women you've been proposing to? Do I ever throw your age in your teeth? Would it become me to order *you* not to propose to anybody? You couldn't do it! I've heard of a man that couldn't—and there's a capital story——"

Then Bathurst walked away without any ceremony to improve his ill-temper and low spirits.



“Ah, poor fellow!” quoth O’Buncous, “he misses the best thing in life;” and he began to whistle “Love’s Young Dream.”

“A note from the Glade!” muttered Bathurst, as he took a letter from a servant, who intercepted him. “There is mischief.”

“DEAR COLONEL BATHURST,

“May I trouble you to come to me at once? I do not apologize, for I am in great trouble. Come.

“KATE ELMORE.”

Although the signature naturally reminded him of the brilliant girl he knew by that name, the note he knew must be from her mother.

He went at once, anxious and self-absorbed. A hundred suggestions passed through his brain as he hastened over the road.

Once there all doubt was ended. He was shown into a room, where Mrs. Elmore

received him alone. She was quite calm, but he saw she was suffering much distress.

“And this is the woman whom we accused of being unsettled in her mind,” he thought bitterly, as the realization of all the miserable circumstances grew upon him.

“Adelaide is ill,” she said, quickly. “I have had a letter from a stranger. I do not hesitate—I am going to her. I’m sure there is danger. She cannot write.”

Absorbed by her own pain, she did not notice that the blood had forsaken Bathurst’s face, and that he was gnawing his moustache furiously.

“In all probability I shall be absent some time. It would be a great comfort to me if you, being here, would kindly see to my girls.” Here her voice broke. She paused for a moment, and then continued, “They are quite unprotected, you see.”

He took her hand. “They are *not* unprotected while I am here,” he said, abruptly.

The words were not abrupt to her ; they were quite satisfactory.

“ Another favour,” she said. “ I’ve no idea about the trains, and I wish to save time.”

“ I will attend to that. Have you no details ? ”

“ Only a mere message. I gather from the address only that she is not at the vicarage.”

This was singularly alarming to Bathurst. If not at the vicarage, where could she be ?

“ Where ? ” he asked, looking down upon her in all the strength of his manhood, in all his pity.

She shook her head.

“ There is no explanation. The address is none to me. Do you know Grimslade ? ”

“ I wish I had never heard the name of the con—I beg your pardon. No. It’s a beastly hole. She never ought to have gone there.”

Then Mrs. Elmore shivered, cast up her hands, and burst into tears.

“Oh, I’m a brute !” exclaimed the colonel. “Do forgive me ! I hardly know what I’m saying. But—never mind. Clare—my sister, you know—always says it does her good to cry. There’s a capital train that meets the North express. If you’ll be ready at four, the carriage shall be here, and—I’ll see you off.”

“I can’t intrude so much,” commenced Mrs. Elmore, looking at him gratefully through her tears.

“You mustn’t mention it,” he said, impressively. “I’ve nothing else to do. I shall be delight—no ; hang it ! I don’t feel like ever being delighted again,” he added, grimly.

## CHAPTER XI.

“ I AM GOING NOW.”

NEVER was Bathurst's mind more confused, more self-distrustful, and ill at ease than at the present moment. Reflection would not aid him ; for, as Reilly said, “ There was no way out of it.” He put it to himself over and over again, changing facts into fiction to prove himself wrong or right.

The first supposition that occurred to him was this. In the event of ignorance on the part of Mrs. Elmore, or that want of proper feeling which is much worse than ignorance, in that case he might have met this woman, who had so fascinated him, without any knowledge of restraint, and then he would have married her. And he was quite

aware that no harm might have happened from such union ; there was no law to say it must. But where was the use of dwelling upon a condition that did not exist ? Again, if it came to conscience, he must consider his own. Suppose he had been about to marry Adelaide, and had made the horrible discovery for himself ?

Well, put it as he might, he knew he shrank from the bare idea. There was wrong to her, to himself, and last, not least, to society. For he was not one of those who hold that man can ever pay the debt of his own sin. The suffering that might accrue from one such act might run through generations.

“That—

‘Evil is wrought by want of thought,  
As well as want of heart,’

is true enough,” he murmured. What a different thing life must be to those who do not think !” He felt that he envied the man who could decide rapidly without the



burden of self-analysis. "Though he never can be so well satisfied as the man who bears the burden. Reilly seems to draw his conclusions and make his decisions in the same breath. Men are selfish when they are in trouble. I've scarcely thought of him, or of Vin either, since I had that letter. I had hardly calculated my chances, it is true; but I certainly know now that, although there was a difficulty to be bridged over, the bridge would be built."

This new phase of events demanded still closer consideration, for with the knowledge that the woman he loved was in danger, with the knowledge also that she could scarcely be receiving proper care, came an intensely longing impulse to do what he might in her aid. What he might! Alas! it was so little that he might, encumbered with this restricting chain of circumstances. He had been well content, because he was well met. Colonel Bathurst at forty was not

quite the kind of lover that Vivian was at five and twenty, although their characters were essentially of the same type.

Decision of any kind was impossible to him ; indeed, the only thing possible just now seemed to be the increase of his passion. Adelaide's purity, her gentle womanliness, her unselfish desires, were brought only more vividly before him now things had come to this pass. Her resolution to spend her life for the good of others, giving up those pleasures she might and could enjoy for the sake of those who suffered, was to him inexpressibly pathetic. All this, he knew very well, was frequently done by women who had tasted love and found it bitter ; good, true, noble-minded women, who, knowing life held no temptations for them, gave up the whole as well as part of its joys. But in Adelaide's case it was not so ; there had been no such bitterness to disgust her with existence. Ignorant of the strong tide of human passion, her days had been even and

pleasant. She had not chosen this course to bury pain that would be unendurable to live with. This was where the pathos lay to him.

Then a suggestion that she might die crept into his brain and chilled him, chilled the warm life-blood of his heart and paralyzed his thought. He was amazed at his own sensibility. Why would it not be the best thing that could happen under such conditions? No! a thousand times no! He had to recognize how fully his heart and mind were involved with this woman from the very force of his own feeling. Was it possible, in those bygone days, he had loved that bright child-girl as he now loved Adelaide? That past was like a dream to him now. And this—this would end in being a dream to him; it could be nothing else.

And for her? Of course she knew the secret he had just learnt. And how would such a mind as hers accept it? Well, he knew that already; he could answer it for

himself. There had been no chance for him at all; that was the fact. And he had willingly deceived himself into the idea that there was a future to be anticipated. That there was no such future now, strangely enough, only made the woman more dear to him.

That day he avoided O'Buncous as far as possible, and, after explaining that there could not now be any excuse permitted for calling at the Glade, got himself away on the pretext of writing letters, and shut himself up in the library, where he actually did write several notes, though not for conscience' sake.

"That had to be done," he told himself; and he was aware that everything would be an effort now.

Then he wrote a word to Reilly. This was due from politeness only. There was no effort required here, for here was the subject upon which his mind was bound to dwell.

"As you say, there is no way out of it. And I sincerely wish we had known as much at first as we know now. In the depth of my heart, I hope none of the women are concerned. Is that likely, do you think? They have had the bar direct before them all their lives; still, I cannot but think our domestic familiar intercourse was very unfair to them. Vivian is right out of my power; he has gone, and I intend to keep him away."

Then Bathurst came to the last phase of matters—Adelaide's illness. Of this he spoke with careful reservation, with a reservation that could but be apparent to a discerning mind. Yet he was quite unable to dilate on the subject. He knew he was in duty bound to mention this thing, which was a trouble to him, although he could not admit that it was one.

He rose early next day, after a long weary night, and went out. The morning was dull and misty, dark and unpromising.



“A symphony in gloom,” he said, cynically.

He strode on hurriedly, self-absorbed. As he walked away from the house, the external effects were more wretched still ; the atmospheric pressure was in itself enough to lower the tone of a man’s spirit. If the weather was like this here, what could it be at Grimslade ? The very name was obnoxious to him. Truly, the best of natures are contradictory sometimes. He was a philanthropist. The greatest good to the greatest number had always been his theory, yet here he felt convinced that more good could be bestowed upon him individually by the devotion of this one girl than might be gained by any computed number of Grimsladians.

He lingered as he passed the Glade gate. He wondered whether any one would be up. It would hardly do to call at this hour ; but he was longing to do so. There might have been a telegram ; there could not have been a letter.



On he went through the lane roofed with interlacing elms, through which Kate and Vivian had ridden a few weeks ago under very different aspects. It was muddy now. There were pools of water here and there, half hidden by the fallen leaves, into which he splashed unconcernedly, unmindful that he had come out in his slippers. Miserable, indeed, everything might be—it was ; but anything must be better than inaction.

Eight o'clock ! The clock of the old grey church chimed out the hour just as he returned after an hour's exertion.

" I might call in half an hour," he thought, "without great singularity. Those girls will not suspect anything."

Here was the postboy. Of course he would branch off from the main road, and ring that deep-toned bell at the Glade gate. He, however, did not ; he passed on whistling, and unconscious that, of all men in the world, men of his calling were, perhaps, watched and awaited with more

intense excitement than any royal personage could ever hope to inspire.

It really was not quite half-past eight when Bathurst summoned resolution, and called. The girls were lingering over breakfast. His coming was a relief.

"I'm not going to apologize," he said. "I have come for news. I hardly liked to see your mother go away alone yesterday."

"Nor I," said Mary, quickly. "I think it would have been better if we had all gone together."

He shook his head. "Is there no letter?" he asked.

"No," said Kate, excitedly.

"And no telegram?"

"No."

"H'm!"

"Will you send a telegram for me?" asked Mary.

"Certainly. You are naturally impatient for a word."

"I am so afraid," cried Kate, clasping her hands, "that I can't bear to think."

"Thinking isn't very pleasant," he replied, slowly. "Of course you want to be able to do something, but you can do nothing yet. We must hear first."

"I feel as though I would give anything if Doctor Reilly could be there," said Mary, earnestly, those calm, clear eyes travelling far into the distance.

"So do I. He is a man to depend upon. All medical practitioners are not like him."

"And my mother will not know how to get at the man of highest ability."

"Cannot—will not the vicar with whom your sister is staying——"

"Oh! those people would be of no use," interrupted Kate.

Bathurst looked at her inquiringly.

"Well, the fact is mamma did not wish us to tell you."

"Kate!" expostulated Mary.

"Oh! I can never see the use of secrecy

about anything ; a fact's a fact, and it's got to be faced."

"It has, unfortunately," muttered he, gloomily. "What about these people? What can it matter what I know?"

"Only this," said Mary. "Mrs. Wallis—that is, the vicar's wife—is an unpleasant person in many ways, and it was really wrong that Adelaide should have stayed there from the first—according to my way of thinking."

"And your mother?"

She thought so too. But I should have acted quickly; she did not. The plain truth is, Dell is really stronger than my mother; she has greater influence than either of us."

"Then that accounts for your sister being at another house?"

I think so."

"They cannot possibly have refused to take her in?"

"One might expect anything from such a

woman!" exclaimed Kate, with a shrug of her shoulders. "A woman who paints and comes down to breakfast at eleven, and dresses like a girl when she's an old woman, and who keeps her husband in such subjection that he is——"

"Kate!"

"As I said before, it's a fact."

"Go on with your description, Miss Kate. She must be a charming personage."

She laughed; and then stopped, looking suddenly serious. "Don't beguile me into talk, colonel. It seems wicked and unfeeling to be sitting here chatting and—laughing!"

"Nobody laughed but yourself, Kate," said Mary, sadly. "I never felt less inclined."

"Nor I," said Bathurst, acquiescing.

Their eyes met sympathetically. They were both troubled, and they both knew it. When her eyes were lowered from his face, they fell upon his slippers, and they were

very muddy. Not a shadow of a smile moved her lips at this discovery. The eyes she lifted up to his again were shining, though she could not see through them for the mist. It was to her, with such strong though latent sympathies, as though she understood all through the medium of the slippers.

“Well, I’ll go and give in the telegram,” said Bathurst, rising.

“Yes, that’s right,” said Kate. “Go on,” she added impatiently, regardless of politeness. “There’s the bell! Oh, Mary!”

And Kate stopped, turning pale, and unconsciously pressing her hand on her heart. Bathurst went to the window. Mary left the room.

He saw the boy deliver a yellow envelope at the gate, and he saw the middle-aged, stern-faced woman walk up the path with it in her hand; and it may be stated in his honour that he did literally feel “as nervous as a girl.”



Because a man stands firm as a rock, with a grave quiet face, it is often supposed by women that he has no sensation. This, however, is a mistake not made by all. Anxious as Mary was when she entered the room hurriedly, breaking open the envelope as she came, she discerned in the erect figure that took only one step in advance, and was again still, an anxiety equaling her own.

"Tell me!" cried Kate, putting her hand over her eyes.

"I can't see," said Mary, holding the paper with both hands to keep it steady.

Bathurst crossed quickly and looked over her shoulder. It did not occur to him for one second that he did anything in the least uncommon as he read aloud, "Very ill. No time to write. Doctor next to useless. But I am here."

Silence for the space of half a minute.

"That's just all we knew before," said Mary, in a low solemn tone, "except that mamma is there."

“What ought we to do now?” asked Kate, appealingly.

“I don’t know,” said Bathurst.

“We need not send our telegram now. I shall write. How dreadful it is!”

“Yes,” said he. “I’m going now.”

He felt there was nothing left for him to do or say. And so he went, leaving the girls looking at each other in apprehensive silence.

Out again in the mud and mist he went. But he walked with more energy and decision in going away from this house that had so much interest for him. He had come to a resolution now. It had been made in the space of a minute after he had read that message—he would go to Grims-lade at all risks. He would go and give what aid he could. Excited and apprehensive as he was, the most alarming construction was naturally placed upon the words of that message. Well, even if she is to die he will be near her. If it were to be that,

he would tell her. If she does not love him there can be no harm ; and if she should, did not his own heart prompt him and say the knowledge will make her glad ?

"I think we had the chief of all Love's joy  
Only in knowing that we loved each other."

The lines came across his mind unbidden. Certainly his fear was strong within him. How unaccountably this ridiculous comedy was turning into a tragedy !

## CHAPTER XII.

## GRIMSLADE.

WITHIN the pleasant precincts of Netherby was another prospect, one with which Bathurst was not in tune.

O'Buncous was breakfasting.

"I didn't wait," he said, gaily ; "I know you don't like it, and—by Jove, you are right ! I've got accustomed to your cooking at last, and I don't hesitate to say that I like it."

"That's fortunate," said Bathurst, helping himself to coffee.

"It's a little pleasanter inside than out—isn't it ? I suppose you went in search of an appetite."

"If I did I didn't find it," said Bathurst, grimly, gulping his hot coffee.

"You're looking down in the mouth. Is your liver out of order? Autumn's the time to try it."

"Autumn's over," interpolated the colonel.

"And a pleasanter season I never had in my life!"

"But everything must have an end, you see; and I shall be obliged to leave to-morrow. A matter of some importance takes me—h'm! I'm happy to hear you have found the time pleasant, since we must part."

"Don't mention it, me dear boy! I'm perfectly comfortable."

"I—I—really—I'm very glad to hear it; but, you see, I'm compelled to go."

"I shall be all right. I implore you not to propose my going. As I said to you the other day, Bathurst, I can make myself as comfortable as you like, but I can't leave the spot. Don't ask me to do it," he added

emphatically, running his hand through his hair to assist the show of agitation ; “ don’t ask me to do it ! ”

The position was a novel one to Bathurst. It was, of course, very pleasing to know that one’s efforts to entertain an old friend had been crowned with such success that he refused to leave the house. He was perplexed.

“ Now,” said he, “ I see that I must be plain. There are many reasons why it would not do for me to leave you here. Need I—explain them ? ”

“ If it’s my propriety you question,” exclaimed O’Buncous, starting from his seat excitedly, “ by me sowl, you’re deceived ! I’m as modest as yourself, Bathurst ; and that’s saying a good deal. My manners are not as high and mighty, it is true ; but I respect the female sex in a way that few men do. By-the-bye, how’s Miss Elmore, I wonder ? I suppose they’ve got a full account by this time. Somebody ought to go over and



inquire. I'll go myself, as you feel indisposed."

"By no means!" exclaimed Bathurst. "Do let us keep to our point. I have many arrangements to make, and can't afford to lose any time."

"Anyhow, somebody must have the decency to call over there," said O'Buncous, pulling down his waistcoat, which had an awkward knack of crumpling up at what had once been his waist. He surveyed himself at the looking-glass as he spoke, and was evidently satisfied at his appearance. Bathurst surveyed him sternly; he was more perplexed than ever.

"I've no arrangements to make; I'm not busy. Leave it to me," said the major, persuasively.

"I tell you it must not be thought of!"

"*Somebody* must think of it; it's a matter of mere politeness. Whatever your business may be, after the intimacy that has taken

place, and the lasting regard that one of your visitors will ever retain——”

“ Oh, damn it ! ” exclaimed Bathurst, initiated at last into an oath.

“ Oh ! come I say ; you never used to swear ! That’s twice now ! Look to your own morals, me boy, I say. As the Scripture says, “ Fill up your own moat,”—or something to that effect. I know your suspicions ; you may smother ’em. If you like, now,” he went on, with earnest impressiveness ; “ if you like now, I’ll take an oath—now on the spot—not to have speech with any of your maids during your absence. Will that content ye ? ”

“ I want you plainly to understand. I’ve no wish to throw any doubts whatever on your discretion ; but I don’t know how long I may be away, the matter being an important one.”

“ I hope it isn’t funds—I do, ’pon my honour !—because I can’t offer to assist you there, being short of ’em myself.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Bathurst, seeing his chance, and, like a bold man, taking it. “No, it’s not a matter of funds. Still, O’Buncous, if I can assist you at an awkward turn of events, I shall be *most happy*. Forgive the—what I may term the indelicacy——”

“Oh! I’m not so particular. As I said before, don’t mention it. Between old friends there *should* be no delicacy in such matters. Bless you! I never feel it myself. I should only be too delighted to assist anybody if I could; but it’s not in my power. Suppose we say twenty?”

O’Buncous looked quite anxious at the suggestion.

Delighted with his success, Bathurst’s anger vanished. He looked very grave, almost solemn, as he pulled his moustache, and said, “It’s a large sum. Are you going to start a public company? Twenty thou——”

“I didn’t say thousands—I meant pounds!”

cried O'Buncous, thoroughly taken in, and conceiving a vast respect for Bathurst immediately.

"Oh! if that's all, I'll write you a cheque at once. And, old fellow, you'll be ready to start some time this morning?"

"Sure enough—sure enough!" agreed O'Buncous. "What direction do you travel in? I could be of no service, I suppose, my time being unoccupied?"

"Not the least in the world!" said Bathurst, impatiently. "Don't think of it!"

"That's what you always say," observed his old friend, cheerfully. "I should lose my memory entirely if I took your advice. Don't you ever think of anything yourself?"

The colonel was occupied in hastily writing the cheque at this moment. He looked up at O'Buncous wonderingly. No one could say what this child of nature would say next.

“Certainly, before I go I should like to know how the young lady is ——”

“That’s an equivocation! You don’t care two straws. And, look here, I’ve passed my word that no man shall enter those doors but myself.”

“And a precious nice arrangement it is!” O’Buncous shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands hopelessly. “I might swear to such an arrangement myself——”

“Hang it! you were not asked by the girls’ mother. Who the devil do you think would trust you?”

“Why, you’ve done it yourself, me boy, to the extent of twenty quid. I’ve always heard that when you borrow money of a man, you give him the right to insult you. There’s a devilish good story about that——”

“*Everybody* knows it.”

“I don’t know about that,” said O’Buncous, who was very proud of the originality of his anecdotes. “I’ll bet, now, yours was about—what is yours, now?”

“Mine?” replied Bathurst, contemptuously. “I haven’t fallen into my ‘anecdote’ yet. I *must* be off. Now, you’ll be ready before noon? We’ll have lunch at one, sharp.”

“And you’ll have to go to London, anyhow. I can go so far with you.”

There was no way out of this. Bathurst knew it would be only a loss of time to pretend to go elsewhere, and that he could not afford. Still, to a man in his frame of mind, this was a detestable clause in the anticipated journey.

He went to his room and wrote a short note to Mary Elmore. Unforeseen circumstances, he explained, demanded his presence elsewhere. As soon as possible he would return. Meanwhile, should the slightest difficulty arise, a letter addressed to his housekeeper would be forwarded to him immediately, wherever he might be. Then he added a postscript. “Please oblige me by not mentioning my enforced absence to Mrs. Elmore.”



This was an after-thought, and he made it emphatic. He knew that Mary would respect his request.

The journey to London was tedious enough, still he was satisfied on one point—he had managed to take O'Buncous with him, and he managed also to leave him on their arrival without much delay. He evaded curious questioning by vague replies.

“No ; I'm not going to the Æsthetic. Having no appetite, I don't want to dine. Besides, I shall lose my train.”

“Going North, aren't you ?”

“Yes,” hesitated Bathurst. “Dear me, how they have improved this part of London ! It's amazing ! Think I'd better take a cab. It's beginning to rain. Good-bye, O'Buncous ; excuse my haste.”

“Certainly ; and many thanks for the—all of it, you know. You'll see me again at Netherby.”

“Ah ! doubtless,” said the colonel, getting into a hansom.

“That’s a relief!” said he, as the cab twisted round from the curb. “I wonder how long he would have made ‘himself comfortable’ at my house?”

He travelled straight on. He was impatient beyond description to be *there*.

As Adelaide had said, “Grinslade was ugly.” It looked hideous, on this dull November night, when Bathurst arrived, too late to do anything. He sat himself down to consider what it was he really meant to do. He felt truly that if he had not been in love with Adelaide, he could have acted very differently. Knowing all he did now, it would be cruelty to force his attentions upon those two women who were placed so helplessly here. He took the whole night, with the exception of an hour’s intermitting sleep, to revolve the question in his mind, and to apprehend the worst. He made the discovery next morning that he was looking very unlike himself; and then he turned from the unpleasant contemplation

of his own countenance, and looked out of the window.

If Grimslade was hideous the night before, what was it now, amid a steady down-pouring rain? He had conceived the plan of waylaying the doctor as he came from the house, and of avoiding Mrs. Elmore if she should happen to appear outside the doors. Before ten o'clock he entered a narrow dismal street, with mean prison-like houses on each side. He shuddered at the very sight of it. Yes, that was the house—number ten. They were all poor people who lived there; they must be, of course. It was in this very house she was taken ill, here where she was nursing some sick person. Still, this was not the sort of place where he imagined she would be working. Mary had said something about the distressing dirt and squalor. There are degrees of difference, even in poverty, and he was glad to think that she was here, although the comfort to which she had been accustomed must be wanting.

For two weary hours did Bathurst pace that miserable street ; of course, avoiding to pass the house, in case he should be seen. At last he was rewarded. A man undoubtedly of a professional type entered the street, and went straight to the house. There he remained ten minutes perhaps, not more. Of course, Bathurst's position was awkward ; he knew that. Still, he strode on as fast to meet the man as though he had been his dearest foe.

“ I beg your pardon,” he said, when they came face to face. “ Will you grant me a few minutes' conversation ? Allow me to introduce myself to you.”

The plain, stupid-looking man took the card Bathurst handed to him with a kind of dull surprise. He did not glance at it, but he had a patient in view.

“ How can I assist you, sir ? ” he said.

“ I merely wish to place myself in your hands,” said Bathurst, rapidly.

“ My surgery is not far off. If you will accompany me, I shall be delighted.”

“He seems an easy man,” thought the colonel. He would much rather have talked here as they walked, but as he was asking a favour, the least he could do would be to go. For aught he knew, it might be unprofessional to talk in the street. So he walked on in silence. The doctor made several polite remarks about the weather, and that was all.

Into a little dull back room, behind a chemist’s shop, he was led.

“And now, sir, take a seat.” Sitting down at the same time himself, he leant forward, and added confidentially, “Now, will you explain what is the matter with you?”

“Oh, I beg your pardon,” said Bathurst, hastily, feeling sure now the man was outrageously stupid. “There is nothing wrong with me. My business with you is of a totally different nature. Mine is rather a singular position. But I am no hand at circumlocution, and I have every desire to be perfectly just. Will you assist me—as



one gentleman should another ? and I will speak unreservedly."

There was a pause. The man's manner was changed when he found he had not a patient. He rubbed his chin and assumed an air of importance. "That I cannot say. I must first hear your statement."

Bathurst's keen eyes were reckoning up this man as he spoke. "It will be easy," he thought. "You are attending a lady at number ten—a lady by the name of Elmore. Before going any further, may I ask you to give me one word as to that lady's condition."

"Oh ! as far as that goes, although you will understand it is outside professional etiquette, I have no objection to tell you that the lady is very ill—very ill indeed."

"In that case," said Bathurst, drawing a long breath, "my position will be easily understood. I am an old friend of these ladies." As he uttered the words he discovered the statement was hardly true.



Anyhow, he felt like an old friend, and, oddly enough, a vision of O'Buncous presented itself. "I—that is—Mrs. Elmore and her daughter have very little experience in the world, and they are quite strangers here. I am anxious for them both. I am anxious that they should have proper attendance."

Here the man drew himself up and showed some displeasure.

Colonel Bathurst bowed in his most charming manner. "I meant no detraction, I assure you. I want you to understand the position. In plain English, I desire to put this case in the hands of the best man you have in Grimslade. I want you to tell me the name of that man. I want you to deliver the case up to him in a perfectly professional manner, and I am ready to pay for it."

Now, here was something comprehensive to the meanest understanding. The displeasure faded from the doctor's face.

"I see," he said, carefully. "You fear the

lady's illness is dangerous, and you would have further advice. This is quite proper ; there is nothing unprofessional in it."

"There's nothing dishonourable, anyhow," said Bathurst. "I don't understand any other law. You will lose nothing by it."

"I am not thinking of that," said the doctor, modestly.

"Certainly not," said Bathurst. "Now—as to the man you would advise."

"Nelson Parke is a name that I think would be familiar to you."

"No."

"He has written extensively, and he is a man of great ability. His charge is high."

"Never mind that. Get him here to-day ; you can do that. I shall see him afterwards here."

The doctor reflected. His position was somewhat awkward. Already Mrs. Elmore, although she had been there but two days, had urged upon him her desire to have a consultation. And this he had put off for

considerations of his own. Under conditions it was excusable to alter one's mind.

"Don't you think it would be better to wait until to-morrow, at the usual time I pay my visit?"

"Not one moment!" exclaimed Bathurst, imperatively.

"I was only thinking of the alarm we might create."

"Psha! A little tact. I will make it worth your while."

"Precisely. It is out of all order. My fee would amount to—to—let me see——"

"I know you are not thinking about it," said Bathurst, with suppressed sarcasm, "but we may as well arrange your fee. Shall we make it as much as Nelson Parke's?"

"Yes. I think under our peculiar——"

"Exactly. Now, this must be managed without any mention of myself in the matter, as far as the ladies are concerned. You understand that?"

“I will manage it,” said the doctor, with alacrity.

“It’s amazing how your stupid man can always understand money,” thought Bathurst.

“And I’ve known genius that couldn’t.”

“Can’t you go at once?” he said aloud.

“I have a few more visits to make——”

“Then can I go and bring him here? It’s all the same thing, you know; we only save time. You’ll conduct everything, of course,” he added, complimentarily.

“It might be as well. You will leave—  
all explanation—to—me——”

Bathurst was already out of the shop.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE COLONEL SPEAKS HIS MIND.

BATHURST lost not a moment. He found the physician at home, and was impressed by his apparent quickness of perception and his rapid, decisive speech. The few questions answered straight to the purpose satisfied each man as to the other's professions.

Doctor Parke persuaded Bathurst to accompany him. He could start now in a few minutes. While they drove on, he, having gained the necessary knowledge, went on with his rapid perceptive power to discriminate further. He read by unmistakable signs that his companion was as anxious for this patient, whom he had not seen, as

any close relative might be ; but no hint had been given as to relationship.

“There is reason why I should not be present,” said the colonel. “I shall have the pleasure of seeing you immediately after the consultation. You will oblige me ?”

“It is an irregularity of no moment. And pray do not hesitate to speak, if I can oblige you.”

“I shall not,” said Bathurst, energetically. “You will not misunderstand me. I am going to ask you to advise me in getting a professional nurse to assist the lady, if the case should be as I suspect.”

“I shall order everything I find desirable. Leave the responsibility altogether with me. I never spare any trouble when I once take anything up.”

This was no idle boast ; it was a very commonplace statement.

It was strange enough, Bathurst thought, as he again took a seat in the dull back parlour—it was very strange that this con-



sultation should take so long, and the morning visit had been so short. He looked at his watch again ; half-past four. He went out restlessly, and glanced down the street. Unheeding the lashing rain, he walked to and fro, with quick impatient steps, waiting about the miserable place, within sight of the house.

And this was where he was when the carriage drove up. Doctor Parke was not surprised. He alighted hastily.

“ You will kindly see to it at once,” he said politely, staying for an instant to write at the counter. Then he went into the room, and Colonel Bathurst followed him.

There was a momentary silence. Then the colonel said briefly, “ Well ? ”

“ Worse than I expected. It is well I was called.”

“ I knew that. Is there danger ? ”

“ Yes ; grave reasons for apprehension.”

“ You have had worse cases ? ”

The doctor hesitated. "Yes ; but then one could not expect recovery."

"Thank you ; that is plain speaking. Does Mrs. Elmore understand so much ?"

"No. She is naturally anxious. The general condition of her daughter would not excite alarm. I judge from symptoms."

"How did she take your visit ?"

"Old Box went at it so clumsily, that *I* took the explanation up to save unnecessary distress."

"That was well."

"I relieved her considerably. She is a woman who has known trouble, I observed."

"You are right. Did you observe any peculiarity in Miss Elmore ?"

"Except that she is very handsome ? Yes ; I expected cerebral derangement, most common in this stage of typhoid. However, her head is perfectly clear. Sound high intelligence, I should say. She told me she had been nursing in that house, and took some interest in her patient. I admit to

surprise at finding such people. Afterwards I asked Mrs. Elmore where her daughter had been staying."

"That's one of the things I want to get at."

"She said little. I remarked the high-bred delicacy with which she veiled the name of those people. Were they strangers? They were receiving payment. They refused to take her in." Bathurst looked like a thunder-cloud. "It was inhuman; besides, they had no right to refuse her admission."

Bathurst set his lips in a very resolute line. "I shall discover," he said, briefly.

"I will send the nurse at once. She will take instructions from me. Rest assured that you may rely upon her. She is discretion itself—a very superior woman."

The men parted, knowing, perhaps, more of each other from their few minutes' association than some might gather from months of intercourse.

Later in the day, Bathurst found himself

again in the dull street that absorbed all his interest. He wondered if the nurse had yet arrived; he was anxious to see the woman, and gain her confidence as soon as possible. So entirely now was he absorbed, heart and soul, in this issue, that he had ceased to wonder at himself.

Presently he became aware that a young man in clerical dress was coming towards him; he had not observed, however, from which house he had emerged. Insensibly he connected this young clergyman with the vicar. Bathurst walked on boldly, and stopped him.

“Excuse me,” he said, authoritatively; “you have been sent to inquire after Miss Elmore?”

With a glance of weak astonishment, the young man said meekly, “I have not been sent. I merely called to make an inquiry for my own satisfaction.”

“Thanks for that consideration. You are——”

"Curate of St. Eldred's. My name is Hazel."

"Thank you again. Good morning."

Bathurst's keen eye detected in the distance a figure in a long dark cloak advancing rapidly. He hastened on to way-lay her. They stopped simultaneously.

"You are Colonel Bathurst?" she said. "Doctor Parke said he was sure you would be here."

"His discernment was not at fault."

"It never is," she said, simply. "What have you to say, sir?"

"He said I might trust you. In the first place, then, *I*—do not exist. There must be no one in this case but yourself and the doctor. Take care that everything possible shall be provided. The place is mean. A woman's eye will soon discover——"

"I understand exactly what you want," she said, quietly.

"Let me know by some means—hesitate at nothing. I am here with the sole object

of watching over these ladies, who are so helplessly placed. I am staying at the Crown."

"I shall let you know," the nurse said, with a grave inclination of the head. "I waste no time."

Indeed, the two interviews had been remarkably brief. As Bathurst turned the corner of the street, he saw the young clergyman lingering, evidently in expectation.

However, the colonel had as much information as he wanted. "I can find out St. Eldred's for myself," he thought. He glanced at his watch. Yes, time was suitable ; he would go at once. Indignation was burning in his breast. He would speak his mind, and the sooner the better.

Finding his way into the town, he made inquiries, and soon discovered the church in question ; then he made his way to the vicarage just beyond, and gave a knock at the door, in which all the strength of his



character was expressed. It is a positive fact that a man cannot knock at a door after his usual habit when his anger is high.

He asked to see the vicar. He was requested to wait in the hall while the servant made inquiries.

“Mr. Wallis is not at home. Is your business of any importance? If so, Mrs. Wallis will see you.”

Mrs. Wallis ! Bathurst never had, in the whole course of his life, bullied a woman. He did not know how to set to work. The bare idea grated upon his feelings.

“My business is with the vicar,” he said, briefly.

Now, Mrs. Wallis had seen the commanding figure of the colonel from the window, and had at once conceived an intense desire to make herself agreeable.

The maid returned with a message. Would the gentleman await the vicar’s return ?

The gentleman would wait.

He was shown into a room, evidently the library. Bathurst sat down sturdily, and folded his arms. Whatever the manner of man he might meet, he was prepared for him.

After a few minutes, there was a slight rustling noise, the handle of the door was turned, and a lady entered. She stopped for a moment in apparent confusion, and then said, with what was meant for the most fascinating air of girlish modesty, "Oh! I am very sorry. I thought you had been shown into the drawing-room. I am very sorry;" and the lady looked more bashful still. But though she cast down her eyes and smiled, Bathurst could see at once through the common affectation of the woman. The deep red dye upon her cheeks and her blackened eyebrows were clearly such lies to nature, from their harsh hues, that in the course of a few seconds he had quite formed his conclusions on the vicar's wife.

“Pray, madam, do not apologize for entering your own room,” he said, with cold reservation.

This was just the manner most suited to excite Mrs. Wallis’s attention.

“I—I wanted to find a book,” she said, with a side-long glance. “I am so dull when my husband is away. I am quite nervous when alone.” She moved her head, and all the mass of curly hair shook with the movement.

“Surely, it is a wig!” he thought. “The woman must be at least sixty, and she is rigged out like a foolish girl.”

She began to rummage among the books, rustling her huge mass of drapery with evident pleasure. She had no doubt whatever that this cool, handsome man was admiring her.

“Poetry is my delight,” she said. “I am so constituted that I take pleasure in nothing that is not perfectly refined and elegant.”

Being called upon to speak, he said

quietly, "Indeed, madam, that is unfortunate."

"Unfortunate!" she exclaimed, in a high shrill tone, following up with a girlish giggle, "Oh! what can you mean?"

He was spared the explanation, for he heard a footstep outside, and waited.

The vicar came in. He was a tall, spare, leathery-looking man, with a coarse mouth and an awkward manner.

His wife threw her arms upon his shoulders. "Oh, my darling, I am so glad you have returned so early! Have you been in the rain? Really, no one but a dog should go out in such weather."

"Ah! but an English clergyman has to work, dear one."

She patted his face.

Now, Bathurst was not in a good temper, and he may, perhaps, be forgiven if, during this episode, the temper did not improve. He had risen.

"May I ask the favour of a little time

with you ?" he said, addressing the man in a commanding voice.

"Certainly," said the vicar, suavely. "I am at your service."

"What I have to say cannot be said in the presence of a lady."

"My dear one, you will kindly leave us."

"A wife should always be by her husband's side," she whispered. Turning to Bathurst, "We are *one*," she said. "There are no secrets between us."

"I have no desire that there should be," said Bathurst, austerely.

Oh ! the man was a bear—a brute, she thought. She gave a little hysterical cry.

"Command yourself, my loved one ; the gentleman means no offence. He is probably in great anguish of mind, and stands in need of ghostly counsel. At such times men forget the tenderness of your sex."

He took her hand and led her to the door, where, after another caress, she left them.

Bathurst ground his teeth bitterly. "This

is a creature who is considered sane !” he muttered. He had not prepared his words ; he was no orator. If he had prepared a sentence, he would have forgotten it. “ Do you profess to be a Christian, sir ? ” he demanded.

“ I—really, sir, you astound me ! ”

Mr. Wallis gathered his bony limbs together, and sank into a chair. Such a question as this had not been put to him in his life.

“ I don’t wonder at your astonishment. Surely you might reply in the spirit of your *profession*,” said Bathurst, sarcastically.

The vicar was dumfounded.

“ Well, you don’t appear to know what you are. You are not a Samaritan at any rate.”

“ A—a—— ”

“ You need not be afraid ; your robes protect you. This is my business. A young lady was sent to reside in your house, by your arrangement with her mother. Do



you conceive, for one moment, that that young lady was in your charge upon the assumption of your being a gentleman."

"Really—I protest——"

"Beyond this, you were amply paid, and were legally bound to give Miss Elmore protection. You sent her back from your house to die among strangers—if Fate would have it—in a mean poor dwelling where no care of any kind could be bestowed upon her. I warn you that I have no respect for anything you can say."

"I—I—oh! my position is most distracting!" cried the vicar, flinging his hands above his head. "O God! I am tried for Thy good reasons."

"The less play-acting the better," said Bathurst. "Explain!"

"The flesh is a scourge—a scourge to us all."

"If you said the flesh should be scourged, I would agree with you," said Bathurst, gruffly.

“The delicacy of my position——”

“Confound the delicacy !”

“In my house, sir,” said the vicar, severely, “your language must at least be——”

“What I like,” interrupted Bathurst, disdainfully. “What earthly reason——”

“Excuse me ; but—are you a married man ?”

“I haven’t come here to be catechized.”

“I cannot hope to make the matter clear, if you are unmarried.” Then he cried excitedly, “Here, sir, is the letter I was engaged in writing, to my infinite discomfiture, when the young lady fell ill. Upon that I—I thought there might be no necessity to forward it.”

The vicar’s hand shook as he searched the drawer of his writing-table, and placed an open sheet upon the table.

Throwing upon him a glance of withering scorn, Bathurst took up the letter. He read it through in silence.

“MY DEAR MADAM,

“I have to approach you upon a singular subject, one which, however, I make no doubt you will easily comprehend. It is said that the back is suited to the burden ; but, alas ! there are times with all of us when patience gives way, and the burden becomes unendurable. Madam, I am a married man, as you know, and had I seen your daughter I should never have made any arrangement to take her into my house. Her beauty is the great stumbling-block. Alas that the flesh should ever control the spirit ! My wife, a lady of high birth, is so devotedly attached to me that she cannot endure the presence of—must I say it ?—of any lady of personal attractions. Is this statement humiliating ? It is well we should all be humbled. The flesh must be subdued. In justice to myself, I should say, yet I am sure I need hardly state, that I have never given cause for any suspicion. And you must allow me to say, also in self-defence,

that you were injudicious in sending your daughter away from you. You will at once see the necessity——”

This was the real termination. Bathurst read no more. He threw down the letter in disgust. “And do you mean to tell me that any living man can allow a woman like that to make an ass of him?”

“Sir, Mrs. Wallis is a lady——”

“May I ask,” continued the colonel, deaf to the interruption—“may I ask if either of you had the common decency to keep the disgraceful topic of your wife’s jealousy to yourselves?”

At this the vicar showed a quite undue excitement.

“You do not know what you are saying; that is, you cannot comprehend how I am placed.” He paused, perplexity on every feature of his dull, heavy face. “This I can say—if ever you are married, you will find it all out for yourself.”

He dropped his arms helplessly in recog-

nition of the hopelessness of the subject. Bathurst regarded him with immeasurable contempt.

“I’m wasting words on you. However, I have had the satisfaction of letting you know what I think of you. Placed as you are, you should be a protector to the weaker sex. This house should be a sanctuary——”

“My dear sir, Mrs. Wallis would go mad.”

“She would not have far to go,” said Bathurst, sternly.

This was such a bitter jest to him.

“The flesh must be subdued; it is the cross we have to bear. No man in holy orders should marry.”

“Then pray why did you?”

“Do not ask me!” The vicar passed his hand over his eyes. “Alas! you have no sympathy with such as I.”

“Sympathy!” exclaimed the colonel, with relentless contempt. “I’m ashamed to regard you as a man.”

“Pray what right have you to come here and insult a man of peace?”

“The right that every man has to defend those who are helpless or wronged.”

Having expended the rough edge of his wrath on this unequal foe, and knowing that no benefit could probably be derived from such a creature as this, Bathurst prepared to leave the house.

“One word more,” he said, in a threatening tone, his rich, deep voice ringing through the hall as he held the study door open; “one word more. If you were a man whom I could fight, I should give you a lesson—a moral lesson—that *would* be a scourge to the flesh.”

With this he stalked out of the house, and walked down the trim gravel path with a military stride that was no longer attractive to the lady of the house, who, having heard these last hard words, was now preparing for a fit of hysterics.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### A QUESTION OF MORAL CAPACITY.

“It is rather curious,” said Adelaide, moving her head restlessly ; “I can’t understand it.”

“My dear, you heard what Doctor Parke said, and what you did not hear I told you. You know one thing—he desired you to keep your mind easy.”

“Oh, fifty such things would not disturb me,” said Adelaide, quietly. “One can’t keep the mind a blank because one is ill. It is so strange that Mr. Box should have refused your request one hour, and have brought Doctor Parke here the next.”

“I don’t care a straw, so long as we have him,” said Mrs. Elmore.

“You need not be anxious, darling ; I

am sure to get well. I mostly grieve about cooping you up in such a disagreeable place. My last intention was to drag you out into the nasty, dirty world."

"Oh! I'm not going to say too much against the world."

"You have, mamma!"

"In a general sense. Look, now, at the kindness we are receiving from a perfect stranger. Doctor Parke has sent that most valuable woman, who has already given me one night's sleep and many inestimable hints."

"She is admirable," said Adelaide. "And since she is here, mamma, you'll go out to-day. The sun is shining."

"Not to-day, dear. Soon, I hope. This light is too much for your eyes. And, Dell, I shall talk no more."

"Give me that beautiful white chrysanthemum. It always soothes me to touch a flower. Don't you remember what beauties Colonel Bathurst used to send us in the

summer? I wonder where this came from?"

"The nurse brought them in with her."

"She *is* an admirable woman to hit upon my taste."

Mrs. Elmore darkened the room, and took up her book. She noted the deepening flush on her daughter's face, and would say no more.

Adelaide was looking really more beautiful than ever. Usually she was pale. It was only under excitement the rose-pink flushed into her cheeks. Now the colour was high, and the eyes marvellously brilliant. In this darkened room they looked like stars. The hand in which she held the flower caressingly was hot and tremulous.

They were happy days, those she had spent last summer at the Glade, by far the happiest she could remember. Everything was so charming, the place so beautiful, the weather heavenly, all she loved around her, pleasant little argumentative chats with

Reilly and Vivian in the invalid's room, lovely snatches of music now and then, exquisite flowers, beautiful people. Were they not all beautiful? Her excited brain brought their features vividly before her. The loveliness of that "boy" she so admired, and of Kate whom she so tenderly loved, and of her mother, in whom there was a pathos beyond all——

But the greatest fascination upon which her mind dwelt was on the strong, commanding outline of Bathurst's face, that strong, harmonious profile she had so often glanced at in the course of those happy afternoon walks. How happy she had been! although she hardly knew it then, because—— because we never know our happiness until we miss it.

The contrast between that past life and this one she had chosen for herself was very sharp. But she had no regrets. Her mind was perfectly at ease. Her memory was her friend, and she had dwelt incessantly

upon those happy days. In every hour of peace and rest they came back upon her, and were almost as real as her miserable surroundings.

It has been said that the man who can remember a pleasure can always enjoy it again. Nor is it necessary that the imagination should be vivid for such reproduction of the past. An effort of simple memory is all that is required, and not unfrequently the vision comes without an effort.

She slept with the white flower in her hand.

Doctor Parke came. He entered with that artistic tread that was one of his peculiarities in a sick room. He would by no means have the patient disturbed. He stood and looked at her for a minute in silence, Mrs. Elmore by his side.

"She is wonderfully beautiful," he said naturally, as he might speak of a child.

Then they withdrew from the bedside,

and stood speaking in low whispers by the fire.

“Is she worse?”

“Do not be alarmed. There are certain stages through which she must pass. She will be worse. Rely entirely on your nurse; she knows how to watch for symptoms. I shall see you again to-night.”

“To-night! There must be danger.” Mrs. Elmore’s reason took alarm at this. “You are deceiving me.”

The doctor smiled benignantly. “This is an interesting case,” he said. “And permit me to say, that in my profession a man is sometimes glad to have an opportunity of watching certain phases. You will understand, please, that I visit when I like, for my own satisfaction. You need not disturb yourself about fees.”

She put out her hand gratefully. He took it, understanding her action.

“I cannot thank you,” she said, earnestly; “but please make no diminution in your



charges. I am fortunately able to pay, and am glad of the opportunity of having such advice as yours."

"That's well!" And with another reassuring smile, he left her.

Mrs. Elmore sat down and took up her book mechanically, and she went on reading mechanically, until she came to the turning of a page. Then she dropped the book in her lap. Even she had science enough to know that when the mind refused to be fixed at a certain point it had better wander where it would.

"I'm only giving myself a little harder work by trying to do that," she thought.

She felt it was her duty to read; therefore, as a matter of course, she had attempted to do it. She knew there should be a relief to the mind, but she also knew she was not getting it.

And so it had ever been with this scrupulously honest woman. For all the years of the prime of her pure life she had con-

scientiously striven for the right. She would do so on her dying bed, and never know she was at all uncommon among humanity. "If it is right that this should be," she had been accustomed to say, "it *shall* be." And, although she was not a woman of peculiar strength of will, it was astonishing how closely her conscience kept her to the resolution she had chosen.

A slight movement from Adelaide attracted her attention. Then there was a murmur, an uneasy sound of pain.

"My dear, are you awake?"

She went over to the bedside, and saw at once there was a change. The face was more flushed, the eyes much brighter; there was an altogether strange look about them, one she could not understand.

"That is mamma's voice; I know it. Yes; she is very sweet. You think her beautiful—so do I. The fading of youth has little to do with real beauty."

"Adelaide!" said the mother, in a low, startled voice.

“There! Did you hear? She called me. I must go. Don’t send so many flowers, colonel; it is like so much robbery. You can have none for yourself.”

Mrs. Elmore shrank back in horror. Memories of the past crowded upon her; the dead anguish of years was brought in vivid life before her. “Anything—*anything* but this!” was the unuttered cry of her heart.

“You are quite worn out, madam,” said the nurse, sympathetically. “Let me advise you to rest awhile.”

She saw the intensity of pain expressed by the shrinking form and horror-stricken face, and quietly led Mrs. Elmore to an adjoining room, finding no opposition and expecting none.

“But there is something in it I do not understand,” she thought, as she went back alone.

Adelaide was sitting up. “I cannot stay here all day,” she said. “I’ve too much

to do. Mamma, I do wish you would consider what my position is! I've a magnificent constitution for work, and all I have the chance of doing is for my own amusement."

"You shall have plenty of work," said the nurse, soothingly; "but, with a bad cold like yours, you can't go out in an east wind."

"No." She lay down again quietly. "The colonel says an east wind always makes him ill-tempered. I don't believe it! He has such perfect self-control. He is just my notion of what a man ought to be—strong and certain. Don't you think so?"

"I do, indeed. And, knowing that he would disapprove of your going out, or even moving under present circumstances, I'm sure you will see what is best."

"Oh! if *he* says so, yes. But you're sure he did? How long have you known him? Long enough to know that trick he has with his hand when talking on a subject in which he is interested?"

“Oh yes!”

“Now, what is it?”

The voice was unlike Adelaide's; it was light and silvery, just like Kate's now, as she made the light retort.

The nurse put a cool hand upon her forehead. “You must be still; he desired it. Don't talk any more—now. I'll tell you about him another time.”

The nurse was a sensible woman, whom people called “a plain common-sense person,” not knowing the height of the compliment they paid. She was plain, as far as features were concerned, but the intelligence of her eyes and mouth redeemed the plainness to a wonderful extent. She was said to have great control over her patients. Doctor Parke did not hesitate to say it was by force of mental power. “She can make herself the friend of the most troublesome, contradictory, whimsical creature, and can lead him by the nose,” he had said to Bathurst.



Later in the day, the nurse posted a letter. As she glanced at the address, an idea crossed her mind. "Suppose this gentleman who takes so great an interest should be 'the colonel' ? It's not unlikely ; he has a military bearing." And the nurse smiled to herself, as she thought how reciprocal was the interest between those two.

When Bathurst received the letter, he was moodily reading the *Times*. He had lost his zest for politics just now. He was in that stage when one subject only could engross him, and ideas of it mixed inconsistently with anything he did.

There was really very little in the note, yet he read it over a score of times.

"SIR,

"Doctor Parke considers it necessary to see Miss Elmore this evening. I thought you might probably wish to receive the last account from him. He will be here about nine."



There was really nothing in the note, but it gave him sufficient food for conjecture until the hour arrived.

As Doctor Parke's carriage came into the street at one end, Bathurst came in at the other. He met the doctor when he returned from the house.

"Nurse told me you would be here," said Parke. "Jump in. I'm now going some distance—twelve miles out. I can drop you where you like. It's a fine night, and a walk would be pleasant."

"Thank you," said Bathurst, accepting the offer vaguely. "How are things going?"

"As well as we can expect. We haven't come to the worst. She's a very interesting patient, I can assure you."

Bathurst did not doubt this for one moment.

On this dark November night, the men could see each other's faces only by the dim reflection of the carriage lights, or by the flash of a chance of gaslight. When Ba-

thurst entered that carriage, the farthest thing from his intention was to take a perfect stranger into his confidence. But then, he was innocently unaware that the stranger was a very acute man, who understood human nature in one sense as truly as he did in another. He knew the mind needed diversion, he knew that it relieved mental depression to talk out upon a matter ; so he proceeded.

“Interesting in a double sense. I have given some consideration to the employment of women—the proper employment of women of the humbler classes. Not because the thing requires less consideration, as it regards women of higher classes, but because one can interfere in the one case, and in the other one cannot. Mrs. Elmore briefly explained away the peculiarity of their position in such a house, and led me to understand that for some years her daughter had been anxious to adopt some line of life in which she could assist the poor. Now, a certain

class of mind, and a mind of high moral tone, frequently runs towards such a channel as this. The prospect is enticing. Have you reason to believe that this young lady has been disappointed in the outset of her career ? ”

“ No,” replied Bathurst. “ Have you formed such an opinion ? ”

“ I’ve not had the opportunity of forming any. But that is the usual result.”

“ I think it is a very unfortunate thing, setting aside this calamity, that she should have undertaken such a life.”

“ So do I,” said the doctor.

“ Excuse me—will you tell me why you think so ? ”

“ Certainly. In the first place, one thing cannot be overlooked. Her beauty alone—and I should judge that she is also a very fine woman—would be a strong detriment. In the next place, she has no home here. That, with such a woman, becomes almost a necessity.”

“I quite agree with you,” said Bathurst, warmly.

Instantaneously he cast it over in his mind that the opinion of this man might have some weight with Mrs. Elmore.

“You have not, I presume, attempted to dissuade her?” asked the doctor.

“I?” said Bathurst, desperately. “I have no right to do so. I wish I had.”

“Ah! I see. You are not a relative.”

“I have no control whatever. My interest, in a general sense, arises from two or three common facts, and one peculiar one. These ladies rent a house on my estate, and during the summer a nephew of mine, who met with an accident, received remarkable kindness at their hands.”

“Yes. Gratitude, however, is not a common virtue, though it follows a common fact. Has the lady no male relative, who could represent the real impropriety of the proceeding?”

“Impropriety?” echoed the colonel.

“It is an impropriety for her. I speak in a general sense. Do you know of such a person?”

“I believe they stand quite alone in the world. There are two other daughters. They are all delightful people. But their great disadvantage is that they have no one to guide them. And ladies, such as these, living a secluded life, do not understand the world at all.”

“That makes the position worse still.”

“It does,” said Bathurst, excitedly.

“Yes, that’s what I’ve seen all along.”

“You have never said so?”

“I’m not in the position.”

“H’m! Some one will be in that position before long—when men have a chance of knowing Miss Elmore.”

This was a fair shot; Parke expected it to tell. And it did; although not in the way he expected. Bathurst was off his guard, and said, hastily—

“No, that’s quite out of the question.”

Parke laughed. "Out of the question, with such attractive women as these? You mystify me."

"I was mystified myself once. I spoke inadvertently; but I was interested in what you were saying."

"You are perfectly safe. In my profession men frequently hold the keys of the closet where the family skeleton is kept. You need be under no anxiety for having stated a common fact. By-the-bye, perhaps that was the 'peculiar' fact you mentioned. Have I heard all the 'common' ones?"

"All that bear upon the case."

"I see. Well, it is a peculiar fancy to take possession of such people, one that I should not hesitate to say, in common parlance, would end in smoke."

"That is a natural conclusion, and a rational one, I thought, when it was mine."

"Then you have changed it?"

"Of necessity. As you say—there is no breach of confidence, especially in consulting



you in a matter of science. The other half of the fact is—that the husband of Mrs. Elmore, and the father of these girls, died in a lunatic asylum.”

Parke was silent—ominously silent, Bathurst knew.

“That is—awkward,” he said at last.

“There’s no way out of is,” said Bathurst, unconsciously quoting Reilly’s expressive phrase.

“Yes ; the mystery is quite cleared up—quite. Of course, my hypothesis is out of court. The daughters—do they know this ?”

“I cannot tell. I should think so. What other reason could have been given for their seclusion ? They are all too clever to accept any fanciful excuse.”

“You are not in possession of any of the actual facts with regard to the madness of this gentleman ?”

“No. But I think the fact speaks for itself.

“It does speak for itself. It would deter

any man of high moral tone from proposing to a lady, though, unfortunately, it might not deter him from falling in love with her. It is entirely a question of moral capacity."

"Undoubtedly. I can't believe the knowledge would prevent a man, as you say—" said Bathurst, hesitating. "There—I need not equivocate—I see my secret is out! I don't know how a man could very well keep it, placed as I am."

"Nor I," said Parke. "Although——"

"You are too good a player to lose a game of that kind. Tell me what you meant."

"It is cruel to raise false hopes," said the doctor, thoughtfully. "I think it would be as well to inform yourself of the whole circumstance, since you are in ignorance. I do not see any gleam of hope; I only give you the hint as to where there is a remote possibility of finding one."

"I have no earthly means of discovering. I am not supposed to be in the secret."

“That renders your position so much the easier.”

“How so? To attempt to gain—to gain by accident—the affection of the lady would be a betrayal of all——”

“Exactly. I did not counsel that. Remember that—

‘Nice customs curtsy to great kings,’

and that theories are all very well till we come to practice, and then indefinite instinct teaches us, if we have sense enough to be guided, that men’s brains are needed as well as theories in individual cases. What two positions are ever alike—in every detail? Although in their broad foundations positions are amazingly similar.”

Notwithstanding Parke’s extinction of a gleam of hope, Bathurst caught at the vague idea with avidity.

“I think I’d better get out here, or I shall lose track. Thank you exceedingly——”

## CHAPTER XV.

“LIFE IS NOT FOR REST.”

SEEING how painfully Mrs. Elmore was affected when her daughter's mind wandered, the nurse was careful to keep her away at such times.

“It is no nervous fancy on my part,” explained Mrs. Elmore; “it is a long and dreaded horror—that is ever before me! Do you distinguish any difference in people when the mind is so affected in illness?”

“Indeed I do. The difference is very great. Your daughter, in the worst wanderings of her mind, is perfectly sensible in her ideas. With some patients one has to listen to wild raving nonsense. She is talking quite rationally, although she does not know what she is talking about.”

"Is that a good symptom, do you think?"

"I don't think it has anything to do with the fever, but I think it goes to show that the brain power is capable of a severe strain. Don't you? I will ask Doctor Parke. I believe that is so."

Knowing as she did how critical Adelaide's condition was, she managed to get Mrs. Elmore away by stratagem for the next hour.

"I shall want you later," she said. "I must have you with me in the morning." And the mother submitted to rest in the adjoining room accordingly.

The nurse sat by Adelaide's bed, and soothed her with gentle words.

"What do you say?" murmured Adelaide, restlessly. "I know I am ill, but I don't seem to remember anything about it."

"You do not want to remember. Don't try. You are getting well——"

"No, no; I am worse. I know, too, that I have been saying foolish, wild things.

Are they more foolish than people sometimes say when they are sane ? ”

“ Never mind ; you have only spoken to me.”

“ Oh yes, to you ; and you know all about him. I can trust you. But you are not honest enough to say I am going to die ; you think I could not bear that. But I’m not afraid—not afraid.”

“ Now rest,” said the nurse, soothingly touching the hot hand that was thrown restlessly across the bed.

“ Well, I shall have *all* rest soon ! *Life* is not for rest. When you see him, will you tell him that I love him ? Don’t, please, say, ‘ She loved you,’ as though that were a thing of the past—as though I were a thing of the past—but repeat my words. Say, although I am dead, that I love him—mind you don’t say that I loved him—for love doesn’t die, you know.”

“ No, no,” said the nurse, an unruly tear coming into her eye.



She winked it quickly away; she was ashamed of such weakness. That was not part of her duty.

But the good woman was irrational enough to suppose that it was her duty to give some hint of this to Bathurst on the following day. And her case was quite clear to herself; for every good woman is touched by the sorrow of true lovers, and no argument could have induced her to believe that those two people were not lovers, even though there might be no acknowledgment between them.

Throughout the long hours of that dreary night, in the wild excitement of her sick brain, the poor girl pursued the shadow of the man she unsuspectingly loved. She loved in all pure singleness of heart, neither reckoning on his regard nor recognizing her own.

"And this is love, and this alone—  
 Not counting loss  
 Nor grudging gain—  
 That builds its life into a throne,  
 And bids the idol reign,"

Says an old poem, and it is many a good woman's practice, if it does not quite answer to her theory.

For the third time that day Bathurst found himself haunting that wretched street. He seemed to have no aim but to be there.

“For a spirit in his feet  
Had led him, Heaven knows how,  
To thy chamber window sweet.”

At last, in the dim twilight, he discerned a woman's figure coming out of that dismal house.

“Can I do anything?” he said.

“You are very good.” She hesitated. It would be really kind in her to give him something to do, and let him think he was assisting.

“Yes; I should be glad of your help,” she said. “There are several things you can get for me. You said I must not hesitate.”

“Hesitate? I will search every shop, or take any means——”

A smile would find way on the nurse's passive face. "He is willing to go to the North Pole," she thought; and then the smile faded out, and she sighed after the manner of women over the signs and tokens of a love-affair.

But Bathurst had not seen the smile; it was too dark. He had only paused in the middle of his speech, and he now went on hurriedly, "Hadn't you better give me a list? I might forget something."

She promised to do so.

"And Miss Elmore—are her spirits good? that is to say, does she appear cheerful—I mean calm?"

"She appears exceedingly happy just now. She is in that stage when the mind wanders, and luckily she does not revert to past difficulties, nor conjure up horrors. She dwells upon entirely happy incidents."

"Yes?" said Bathurst, inquiringly.

"One can gather from her talk the beauty and comfort with which she has been sur-

rounded. She sometimes appears to be holding a conversation, and will answer me quite rationally when I reply."

"Indeed?" said Bathurst. "The subject is of her home and friends?"

It was quite excusable that, however discreet, but being still a woman, the nurse should say that which she did say. People must arrive at conclusions, and there could be but one arise in this good woman's mind. Here was a romance; and she must have a finger in it, with discretion. Whatever the difficulty which caused this gentleman to be obliged to hide himself and his kindness, as though he dreaded discovery, she could not tell. But one thing she thought she could tell—that he was most faithfully devoted to her beautiful charge, and, if she had any discernment at all, it was equally certain that this man was the object of the girl's constant thought. She went on innocently—

"The principal object—indeed, the one

that seems to engross her entire thought—is of a gentleman she addresses as ‘Colonel.’ I have never heard her mention any name. Perhaps, sir, you may know the gentleman yourself?”

“Perhaps I do,” said Bathurst, sturdily.

It must be owned he was a little overcome by the information.

“Well, sir, if you do, all I can say is I hope he’s aware he has gained the love of such a sweet girl. I suppose it is a mutual affection, for she seems to have no cause for regret.”

“Yes, that is very likely,” agreed the colonel, finding this plain statement almost too much for his feelings. In his mind such thought had not been permitted to rise, and here was a stranger discussing it in a commonplace manner. Truly, he was the victim of a strange caprice of Fate.

He was glad to be alone. He went over the ground rapidly enough, his spirits un-

reasonably elated. It was an unreasonable elation ; he told himself that. Still—

“’Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark  
Our coming, and look brighter when we come.”

Friendship might not be love, but he felt it would be a pleasant thing to have a friend like Adelaide. Of course, rivalry was out of all question. That is the thing, he thought, to drive a man mad. There was no rival to be feared, even in their friendship. When we cannot have all that we want, we must be satisfied with half, and he knew he would rather have this half than anything else the world had to give him.

Perfectly indifferent to comment or curiosity, he went on his various errands, anxious only to acquire what he wanted.

This done, there was nothing left but to go back to the Crown. There were great playbills staring him in the face. A provincial company he had long wished to see was playing a popular drama that would



naturally have taken his attention. He gazed blankly at the announcement. He was fully aware that no play ever produced, and no actors who ever acted, could chain his attention this night. He bethought himself of Reilly. He would write to him ; he would write explanatorily. He would give him the hint Parke had given to himself. At any rate, he would leave no stone unturned, although he resolutely determined not to allow himself to be deluded. However, on referring to that last letter of Reilly, he saw that it would not reach him now. He had said, " If you want to write during the next week ; " so who could tell where he might be now ? Certainly he might send on a letter on the chance of its being forwarded ; and that he did.

## CHAPTER XVI.

“WHICH OF THE MEN IS IT?”

THE days were long and weary for the two girls at the Glade, who were entirely dependent on each other for society. Each had to acknowledge a restless dissatisfaction, and each attributed it to a natural anxiety for their mother and sister. They had just received an assurance that all danger was past; but although they experienced all the relief this knowledge could give, neither could acknowledge she was quite herself.

“I am quite grateful to Sunday for coming round at its appointed time; are not you, Mary? What with worrying about Dell and mamma, and your excessive dullness——” Here Kate checked herself with

a laugh. "Which *has* been the flattest, do you think?"

Mary shook her head responsively.

"Well, it's gratifying to know we may go outside these high walls for once; that we may go to church without objection, to do anything—do you think etiquette requires us to ask Colonel Bathurst's permission? We must closely resemble state prisoners."

"I don't know," replied Mary, absently. "I was just then thinking it was a singular thing that the colonel should have asked us not to mention his absence in our letters."

"Oh! he thought it might disturb mamma unnecessarily. There's no doubt he was compelled to leave; for it was understood that in the event of any difficulty, we were to appeal to him."

"Yes; but I am still unconvinced."

Then she turned and looked at Kate to see if she could read her own suspicion in those eyes that could but tell tales. No; their soft depths were quite undisturbed.

"I always did think myself the wickedest of our family," Kate observed, with apparent irrelevance.

"Don't be too sure of that. Every one knows the worst of your wickedness ; no one guesses where mine begins."

"Oh ! every one knows it is a law with saints to think themselves wicked !"

As they walked rapidly in the clear morning air, their spirits insensibly rose, and they were more at ease away from the house, which had become so dreary.

Going along the avenue, they met the rector. After greeting, Kate and he walked on, while Mary lingered. She always kept in the background. This she regretted an hour later, for Kate informed her on their homeward walk that she had promised to go and assist in decorating the church for Christmas.

"Mrs. Dormer is not well enough. And only those two old, young ladies, who always look like graven images belonging

to the ancient pile, have volunteered; so, you see, I couldn't refuse. And I promised to bring you.”

“You were wrong to promise anything, Kate. I'm sure mamma——”

“Would not disapprove if she were here.”

“Exactly. But she is *not* here.”

“Oh, Mary, you are always so provokingly right! Yet of what earthly consequence can it be whether I spend an hour with Mr. Dormer and the two old maids, whether I tear my hand with holly thorns, or get stuck in a snow drift? What, indeed, can it matter what shall happen to me? I am of no possible use in the world, which gives me the strongest reason that I might be of some use out of it—at least, as much as was Imperial Cæsar.”

“Philosophy is evidently your forte.”

“Cease your sarcasm; you can't understand me. *You* were never meant for a heroine. At least, I never came across one

who was a cool, deliberate lump of perfection—

‘Dead perfection—nothing more.’

You wouldn’t be the least interesting as a heroine.”

“Define heroine.”

“Oh, you know what I mean.”

“How should I? The word is so misused.”

“Well, take any example in the whole range of history, poetry, or fiction. Not even genius could do anything with a character like yours,” laughed Kate. “But, ah me! my heart is heavy, though I jest.”

“I refuse to be classed with any women in the range of history,” returned Mary, didactically. “Some of them were merely notorious for their bad behaviour, or from accidental prominence during some very mundane climax. A heroine should be a woman who has performed a heroic deed.”

“You can’t alter a law upon a point that is already received. Certainly, in fiction



generally, one could seldom accuse the prominent woman of even attempting an act of heroism.”

“They are false heroines, termed so by courtesy from their association with the hero.”

“Then they are false heroines. Shakespeare did not let his shine only in reflected glory. I wonder if we are very different from ordinary women?”

Kate asked the question with an air of grave perplexity.

“How *can* I tell?” interrogated Mary, with her rare smile.

“I wish I knew! I wish, for a thousand reasons, I could find out!”

“One will do. Give me one?”

“Well, for instance, take the case—seldom be it granted—take the case of our meeting those gentlemen. It is wretchedly irritating not to know what one is right in doing—or in saying. One would not like a man to—make a mistake about one just because of some trifling unconventionality.”

“That man would be a fool,” said Mary, shortly. “But—is this you? You are fit for a heroine of any degree. You are carelessly insolent in your general manner to men, and yet you fear being guilty of a small inaccuracy. You change characters as quickly as——”

“There—there! spare that poor used-up chameleon, a creature who has been basely treated for ages. Is it amazing I should try to reform, when you have all said my manners wanted improvement? It’s only natural to care what people think.”

“Natural — but very commonplace. Wouldn’t do at all for a heroine. You do *not* care for ‘people.’ We are above ordinary desires, as we are beyond the pale of ordinary perplexities. Such things ought not to annoy you.”

“I wish you would, for once, say something that is not just the apex of wisdom. I know it doesn’t matter what any one thinks of me.”

“Don’t be cross, love! Which of the men is it?”

“Which? which?” stammered Kate, blushing furiously. “Why—why, *all* of them! I *like* men. I—I find them amusing——” Then she broke off abruptly. “I am amazed to hear such light talk from you, and I’m glad we are home.”

The snow fell fast all that night and all the next day.

On Tuesday there was a hard frost; still, Kate prepared to start in the middle of the day. It would do her good, she said, and so she set off, walking rapidly along the narrow trodden path, the whole landscape looking still as fresh and pure and undisturbed as when the snow had fallen. The icy air made her cheeks bright; the exercise warmed her blood. She felt glad to her very finger-tips, from the mere sense of freedom and motion, as young things do — unreasonably glad, perhaps; but the sensation was pleasant.

She was near the church now, and, for the first time since she started, a human creature became visible; one of the sex for whom she had lately stated her predilection. It was not Mr. Dormer, nor was it either of the farmers, whose gait she knew well; the figure reminded her strongly of one, the very thought of whom sent the blood dancing more vigorously through her veins. It was impossible, of course. She would not be beguiled by a delusion; so she turned away her head from the solitary pedestrian, and entered the church.

The Misses Ripskin were already there. They had brought some very stiff wreaths on wire, some few crosses of Maltese shape, and there their invention had stopped. They were very stiff, almost as stiff as the monumental figures beside them. Certainly it was cold; the church was very cold; even Kate's warm energy felt the check. Still, she entered at once into the spirit of the work, shaking off the chill of the impression

with her strong vitality. She did not address the ladies, for Miss Ripskin, who was near her, as she walked towards the chancel, pointedly kept her head aside. Kate was born to be social, free, and natural; and slight as this incident was, it had an unpleasant effect upon her. How should she know it was her beauty, added to the fact of her family's seclusion, that caused her to be regarded with suspicious eyes?

The rector then met her. He regretted his wife's absence and the severity of the weather, also that he had no taste in the matter of decoration himself. The young ladies upon whom he generally depended were absent. To all which Kate replied by pleasantly inquiring, since there were no instructions, whether she might do as she liked. Receiving absolute permission, she stepped out into the aisle to take a general survey of the points of vantage.

There was very little beauty in the interior

of the edifice ; it was dilapidated, inharmious, and heavy. Still, a bold design might persuade a casual observer into an impression of beauty. Those too lofty pillars might be considerably lowered in effect, if by any possibility she could reach them.

Fired with the idea, and remembering the old sexton was engaged in cutting ivy from the porch, she went hastily down the aisle, with eyes raised thoughtfully to the roof.

Suddenly coming in contact with something substantial, where she had not expected it, she started back, and out from the gloomy shadows of the background she recognized—Vivian Seymour.



## CHAPTER XVII.

“LOVE ABIDES.”

“O let the solid ground  
Not fail beneath my feet  
Before my life has found  
What some have found so sweet !”

HE did not start. He had stood awaiting her, and now her surprised eyes met his soft blue ones smiling on hers.

Their hands met. The colour that rushed into her face might have been caused by the surprise, perhaps by the touch.

He gazed at her with a feeling akin to adoration. Heaven seemed to open to each at the mere sight of the other's face.

“You ?” Kate whispered, breathlessly.

“I,” he answered ; and the brief sound

conveyed supreme and undisguised satisfaction.

“I thought you were in Leamington.”

“So I was yesterday—you were right.”

“Surely Colonel Bathurst did not expect you?” she said, haltingly.

He smiled at the simplicity of her remark. “I can’t contradict that. I had no idea he was away from home.”

She smiled now. “And that is no affair of mine—is it?” she said, nervously.

Vivian felt those signs of discomposure peculiarly grateful to him.

“I wish I could make it your affair altogether,” he said, with low tender emphasis, keeping his glowing eyes on hers.

Kate’s colour changed again at this. All the roses faded. Bravely did she battle with a too conscious heart.

“That would be rather hard on Colonel Bathurst,” she said, lightly.

He admired her all the more, seeing she made the effort.

"Forgive me. My wish is to secure your interest to myself."

"Mr. Seymour, I can only absolve you from the absurdity of that remark by remembering how I have encouraged you to talk nonsense."

"You have never encouraged me to talk of that which is nearest to my heart. You always resort to nonsense."

"I wish with all my heart I could give you the serious attention you desire," she said, catching her breath, and adding hastily, "I am here on business—I ought to be hard at work. Do you see that heap of evergreens? I mean to put that all in shape while the daylight lasts."

"Delightful! I'm good at this sort of thing. What can I do?"

"Have you nothing—better?"

"There is but one thing better, but I could not sit and look at you. You would not let me. I'll do exactly as I am told."

“Well, then, get me any amount of ivy from the old man outside.”

It was an awkward position, but there was no way out of it, and there was plenty of occupation. She could keep him hard at work. He would scratch his hands, and climb ladders, and do anything she might order. She knew that. And then—then the situation had its charm.

Kate went on vigorously with twine and scissors.

Any one less interested must have been amused to see him return laden with ivy, and the old sexton similarly laden behind him. She, however, was not amused; she was alarmed at the difficulty before her, and knew it would be much harder than decorating the church. She sent him to mount the ladder first, but he could not perform the delicate handling that was required to fasten the wire and twine.

She had to mount, and he to obey every inclination of her hand. He was quite

happy to attend upon that exquisitely graceful girl poised above him, and to be ever passing to and fro the holly or the scissors.

"We are getting ahead of the Ripskins," he said. "But then, we work much harder."

"Yes; and don't you think we're producing something like an effect?"

Vivian paused. The intensity of his admiration was too deep for words.

They were producing an effect beyond the decorations. Those poor ladies, who were so innocently aiding the propriety of the situation, had at last given up eyebrow and lip signals, and had whispered their views concerning this majestic young woman who could trust herself at such a dangerous altitude, and who, in her plain, unfashionable gown, looked to their eyes like a statue clothed.

"I declare it's quite shocking! quite!"

A plain dress without furbelows was

almost indecent to their inartistic eyes, and they glanced at their own humps and paddings and deformities of fashion with more than usual complacency.

“You were surprised to see me to-day? I don’t seem to remember being away—now I am back again.”

“Indeed? I had no idea you were ever coming back.”

“No? My enjoyment has been rather limited on this occasion. I found every entertainment, from beginning to end, weariness and depression of spirit.”

How well he described her own sensations!

“You were out of tune—pass this cord to the opposite pillar, please. Yes, that’s a capital effect. We are getting on! Now, you take the next pillar, and I will take the further one. We shall get it all complete in half an hour.”

He obeyed, and worked steadily. The rector came in again, and they had ten



minutes' talk. The old gentleman could not help expressing his surprise at such an assistant being found. But Vivian explained his presence most composedly, according to his wont.

"Ah! she's a most charming young lady, Miss Elmore," Mr. Dormer said, feelingly. "She is sufficient inducement to any man to take up an entirely new occupation. You prefer peace to war—is it not so?"

"And now the aisle is nearly finished," Kate said a little later, when Vivian came for fresh instructions, "I think I must do something to the pulpit, as it belongs to the centre aisle."

"Well, let me help you. Don't send me anywhere else."

It was a ridiculous appeal, but as pathetic to her as to him. The boom of the old clock struck upon their ears.

"The clock is striking in the belfry tower.' I," he said, "am always reminded of your singing by even the faintest associa-

tion. I heard your voice first in this church.  
How does the song go ?

‘ And warns us of the ever-fleeting hour,  
But neither heeds the time which onward glides,  
For time may pass away, but love abides— ’

‘ But love abides.’ I know it—feel that it is  
so. Have you learnt that lesson ? ” he  
asked, in his low charmed murmur.

A warm flood of pleasure filled her veins.  
All her limbs trembled. She touched the  
stone monument for momentary support. It  
felt like ice against the hand that glowed  
with passionate warmth.

Was this love ? The thought gave her  
pause. If only this intense sensation could  
last for ever ! Was it possible this passion,  
put so far away from her, was still a part of  
her ? Love ? “ Love abides.”

“ Some ivy,” she said, in a quick sharp tone.

Was she annoyed ? Had he offended her,  
even while he strove to keep both voice and  
eye under restraint ? Was the roseate glow  
due to anger ?

"Kate!"

It was an involuntary murmur, the tone of tender appeal. The sweet word lingered on the air; she dared not breathe to break the silence that followed. Alas! she read the confusion and passion of another soul at that spasmodic word. Absorbed in her own danger, she had not thought of his. Her brain reeled and her pulse throbbed as she recognized how weak they both were. She had a foreknowledge, that kind of prescience the most timid girl often possesses, which told her the time had come. This was what she would have escaped, but the forces of nature were too strong for her to set aside. Her strange startled quietness urged him to speak

"You—you understand me, Kate? Don't keep me in the misery of doubt." He held at random a branch of holly towards the limp hand that fell by her side. "You are no vain coquette, Kate. You will tell me by one glance."

She grasped the holly mechanically, and the sharp prickly leaves ran into her fingers, but she did not know it; she was almost as white as the marble now, and her face was averted. She feared to let her eyes rest on him, lest they should speak out the truth. There was an intense struggle in the girl's mind, and she knew she feared herself. Dry, crisp, uneven words found way, the effort to utter them bravely entirely failing.

"Not another word. You have no right to say—such thing."

"I have just the right any honest man has to tell a girl he loves her. I am not ashamed."

And now came a supreme moment. This inexperienced girl felt at once the demand upon her higher nature. She had not realized the intoxicating enjoyment this long love-dream had been to her, and now it rose in judgment against her, for she knew she had yielded to the dream.

All her warm impulse was stayed. One

moment before, she was a loving, impulsive girl, palpitating for a lover's embrace; the next—a woman!

She rose to the height, and knew it.

Her strength had come with her pain. He must be saved! In that one thought her true womanhood asserted herself. She must save *him*; that was all.

She looked at him reproachfully. “Have you not known that we—I and my sisters—stand apart altogether—from the world?”

“Certainly—yes. And I believe that you are convinced, but I am not.”

“The circumstances do not admit of explanation. You must take my word. I—I am going now.”

She put out her hand unconsciously for his assistance. But when his hand grasped hers, the latent passion in her sprung into life. Her brave young spirit fought hard for self-command, though she could not utter the words “thank you,” when she stood on level ground beside him.

"If you are going, I am going too," he said.

Still she did not speak, nor did she look at him. How strange and unreal the old grey church seemed to her! Surely she had never seen the little miserable, cramped pulpit until this moment.

"Will you go?" she asked, vaguely.

"I am going with you," he said, decisively.

Without another word, she turned and walked down the aisle, leaving the ever-greens just where they had fallen.

As they walked down the dim aisle, side by side, the Misses Ripskin regarded them with extreme interest.

"They have left the pulpit unfinished," whispered the elder, as they went to look at it.

"And here are, her gloves—and his cane! Can they have forgotten them?" asked the other.

Kate and Vivian had passed out into the cold, cheerless landscape. Landscape there



was none ; the bare branches, snow-laden, were the only landmarks.

" Very deep—is it not ? " he said.

Kate heard his voice, but her mind did not follow. But he was right, and he recognized the fact to himself—"it was very deep." And she, in the midst of her passionate confusion, was trying to find a course that should be safer, easier than another, rapidly making a decision, and dissolving it with a thought.

" Mr. Seymour," she said at last, " I must earnestly wish that you would go."

" Do not dismiss me so summarily. You say I have done wrong. I must know more before I can admit that I was wrong."

He spoke in a low impressive voice. She knew he meant to persevere.

" I shall never give you up, unless—Leave that—I don't believe in the 'unless.' "

" If you are convinced of a positive barrier, you will not let the memory of a few weeks ruin your life—you *will* give me up."

“ I *shall*—when I am convinced.”

“ There is a real and terrible reason ; one that, for my mother’s sake, I cannot speak of—a reason so strong that no argument can overcome it.” Her words were low and emphatic ; she hesitated not for words, but because, to save her life, she could not have stayed the tremor of voice and limb. “ I would not mislead you, and not for worlds would I permit you to mislead yourself. You do not know what you ask. The secret will remain a secret in our family. No good can come of its being known. Pray be satisfied. . Do you, for one moment, think we can be all equally misled ? ”

Now it was his turn to reflect. She thought he was considering her explanation. He was designing how to surprise her into a confession. He knew she was not indifferent to him, and he also knew that that fact, once admitted, would alter his position materially. He affected coldness. He spoke as though he were hurt and pained.

"Yes, I understand you perfectly, and I will not argue against you. There is no man living with more pride than I. It is not a question of ultimate result at this moment. The die is cast for me. If you were free to-morrow, I would not take you not loving, for love—"love sacrifices all things to bless the thing it loves.' In love all selfish considerations disappear. A mother — sacred as she is — can but be second. Even life itself is worthless——"

"But not honour! Would you have love injure the thing it loves?"

"I would have love *honest* to the thing it loves."

"Am I not honest?"

"Perhaps. To the thing you love—not to me."

She flushed angrily, then paled again. "How can I be more honest than to tell you plainly I dare not in honour betray the secret that prevents me from loving any one?"

“Not all the secrets since the world began can do that!” he said, boldly. “I tell you nothing will induce me to give you up, unless—I will finish the sentence now—unless you can tell me you do not care for me.”

There was an element in Kate's nature that loved danger. She loved sailing close to the wind. “I know what you are doing now,” she said, quickly. “You have been thinking — ‘She will betray herself.’ It was a mean attempt——” She was working herself up into something very like anger now. “But you don't know that the admission would make no difference to me.” She looked at him, and the flash in her eyes showed him a spirit he had never seen there before. She held her head up in proud defiance as she went on, the fire of her anger cooling the fire of her love. “I am not going to take refuge in a paltry admission of ‘caring’ for you. And if I admit that I love you, is that any worse than the thing itself?”

“There is no worse,” he murmured, feeling really amazed that she, who had been hitherto so retiring, so quietly accepting with light retort, should rise to passion so suddenly.

“That is no reply. Do you think the admission could by any possibility affect my action? I’m sure you *did* think so! *Don’t* think that of me again. I thought you were above trick—Silence is consent. No—We shall be on equal ground now. You will understand me perfectly when I say I do love you above everything on earth, and because I do is the very reason why I must save you.”

His face, usually so calm, was now transformed with all the light and speech of a lover’s rapture.

She stood a perfect contrast beside him, her living, burning words seeming to issue from stone, so cold and still was she.

Firm in his belief that the “ruling passion conquers reason still,” he waited in silent ecstasy.

Almost as if she had read his thought, she said, "I think, even with my small experience, I ought to be able to forgive you for that belief in the strength of confessed passion. Oh! but my passion is for right! Tempt me as you may, nothing can affect me. *I* believe in the force of human will against human passion."

He stood almost devouring her with his longing, loving eyes. She was absolutely grand to him now.

A beautiful, loving, gay, pure girl! In this character she had won his heart from the first moment. As a woman, in her anger and self-reliance and strength, she won his soul.

"Why, if my love were less, I should not hesitate to sacrifice you. Do not think I am hampered with exaggerated ideas of obedience? I have been brought up in the school of love. Love can wrong no one. It is because my mother's rule is love that I love her too much to wrong her. If



every girl had a mother like mine, she could not deceive that mother by word or deed. I am glad I have spoken out! Think of me as you will——" And now the flash in the eyes had died out, and her face was calm. "I cannot play a mean, dissembling part; it is not in me. I've known you loved me all along——" Her voice trembled. She held out her hand. "Good-bye! But I did not think—it was so——"

"I'm not going to say 'good-bye' like that;" but he took her hand all the same, and kept it.

"You'll do just what I ask you," she said, looking into his eyes solemnly. He bowed his head over the hand he held. "You will remember me with gratitude—one day."

They were near the great prison-like gate, and she he loved was leaving him; but this could not depress Vivian Seymour. Had she not avowed that she loved him? After

this, the deluge! He gave a rapid glance around; surely, on such a day as this, in so retired a spot, the coast must be clear. No! Here, within earshot, already came a simple countryman, evidently bound for that same gate. Under cover of his approach, Kate hurriedly vanished.

“Now—if it had not been for that accursed milkman——” muttered Vivian. He left the sentence unfinished.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“ REMORSE MUST BE AGONY ! ”

KATE entered the house so much agitated that she was quite beyond the idea of covering her confusion. She went hastily into the morning-room, without considering she would certainly find Mary there. This room—the room that had been given up to Vivian—was lighter and more cheerful than the dining-room, and was used by the family a great deal at all times. But since Mrs. Elmore had been away, the girls had habitually lived in this room. It was a most enticing, comfortable apartment, and now, with its blazing fire, bright lights, and closely drawn curtains, it was a realization of repose.

Mary was seated at the table, occupied with her pencil, books, and drawing materials. She herself was a vision of sedate enjoyment. Just glancing up, she said, "Why, Kate, how late you are! You look scared." Kate! The commonplace words were offensive to her. Nothing to her mind could be commonplace again. "Have you seen a ghost?"

There was an animated struggle in Kate's mind; then she said, in bitter accents, "Yes—I can answer question meant for a jest with an answer that doesn't exactly match."

Now, Mary bestowed more than a casual glance at her sister, and found that the brilliancy of her eyes denoted more than the excitement wrought by twining holly wreaths.

"Kate," she said, gravely and lovingly, "I don't like that voice; it isn't yours."

Kate went to the window, obviously to hide her face. She pulled back the curtain,

and peered out. It looked quite dark outside here from this light room.

Mary put aside her work. "You've had enough snow for one day," she said. "Take off your cloak before the snow upon it thaws, and then sit down and talk to me!" She rang the bell.

"We are just as much ghosts now as we can ever be," said Kate, striving to speak lightly. "It seems to me that this 'I' is utterly distinct from the habitation it is compelled to."

"Not quite distinct," said her sister, warming to the subject. "It is as curious to note the affinity between matter and spirit as it is to mark their dissimilarity. It is a question which opens—Oh, Hannah, please take Miss Kate's cloak, and bring slippers; her boots must be wet.—Kate, you must be horribly tired. You had scarcely a mouthful. Your stomach——"

"My stomach!" cried Kate, impatiently, unclasping the cloak.

“Well, I used the possessive pronoun,” said Mary, deprecatingly; “I did not imply that you—the absolute and veritable *you*—had any connection with the stomach that holds a mean office in the habitation you are pleased to despise. No, don’t go upstairs; for once submit to be waited upon. Slip off your boats——”

“Oh, miss! it’s all very well to say slip ’em off, but they’re soaked through and through, sticking like the skin.”

“Please, Hannah, don’t make any allusion to Miss Kate’s ‘skin.’—Is your dress damp?”

“No; that’s all right. But the snow was very deep when once off the beaten track.—Thank you, Hannah.”

“Now, come and toast yourself. Ah, Kate, I’m really glad you are beginning to interest yourself in scientific subjects. There is literally no end to the amount of interest they contain. One need never be in want of occupation, nor in want of a subject; every-



thing can be turned to account. Life becomes of double value when we can look at everything with a perceptive mental eye, as well as with the mechanical organ that really has nothing to do with us, but takes all the credit it doesn't deserve.”

Here she paused. Kate was evidently not following the thread of the discourse, although she had thrown herself in an arm-chair, and placed her feet obediently on the fender. She was silent, and gazed with her far-off look into the glowing coals.

Mary's object was achieved; she had given her sister time to collect herself.

“I met Mr. Seymour.”

It was an abrupt disclosure, and she still remained gazing earnestly at the fire.

“Did you? Was that all?”

“All,” murmured Kate, as she exclaimed mentally; “and was that not enough?” What she said was, “Don't you think it strange?”

“I don't think it unlikely he should come

to Netherby at any time, nor strange that, being out, you should meet him."

"But Colonel Bathurst being away——"

"That did not occur to me for the moment. He, then, did not know of the colonel's absence?"

"I am not sure."

"I hope you told him mamma and Dell were away."

"I am sure I did not."

"We ought to prevent his coming here."

"He will not come here," interrupted Kate, decisively.

"As a matter of certainty, he will come here. If you merely met him, you ought not to have forgotten your principal duty."

"Principal duty! I wonder if anything ever did occur to you but duty?"

"Many things. Among the rest, that Mr. Seymour has managed to agitate you in an uncommon degree, and I am sorry to see it."

Mary knew quite enough now to anchor

her floating impression, so she steered her course accordingly.

"You cannot be more sorry than I," said Kate, with heat. "Do you think I can be less concerned because he has power to agitate me in an uncommon degree?"

There was no heat in Mary's reply. "Certainly not, my dear." She stooped to arrange a disorderly coal. It gave her a chance of a full view of Kate's face. "No; you are the person principally concerned. It was on your part I spoke."

"Well, regrets will do no good for me!"

"I don't see that we can ever be past regret. It seems to me that if there's one thing likely to last in unadulterate strength until one's dying day, it is 'regret.' After all, there is a certain amount of serenity—a kind of resignation to events implied by the word." She spoke in her usual reflective way now, and was silent for a while, finding her eyes following the fascinating firelight. "But oh, Kate!" she went on, hurriedly,

“regret is nothing compared with remorse—*remorse* must be agony!”

This vein moved Kate visibly.

“Mary,” she said, stretching out her hand and clenching the arm of her chair, “I have been saved that!”

Mary put her hand across the cold, nervous fingers, her soft strong hand that had so much meaning in it. “I could swear to that,” she said, in a low constrained voice.

“You mean that you could trust me?”

Mary nodded. “I’ve seen it a long time. I only wonder mamma did not. She is so easily deceived.”

“Deceived?” cried Kate.

“Hush, my dear! There could be no deceit on your part. It is so unfortunate that no one interfered to prevent it. It is a thousand pities——”

“Oh! *nothing* could have prevented it. From the first moment I looked at him, when he lay like dead, crushed among the

evergreens out here——” she started to her feet, and spoke with the pathetic force of suppressed passion. “From the moment I looked at him, he was something holy to me! I have felt the influence of his slightest word—I’ve been possessed by him to such a degree that he has never been absent from my thoughts, sleeping or waking. Since I have known him my life has been one long dream—nothing else has been real. I have struggled—God knows how I have fought with myself, and used my prosaic common sense, as well as my moral feeling, to aid the horrible bar there is between us—and the result is, that his image haunts me still—that his voice thrills me like exquisite pathetic music—that the memory of every word of his lives for ever in my mind. He is dearer to me in my renunciation of him than any other woman’s lover could be in the possession.”

The pathos of her beautiful voice was enough at any time to melt a heart of

stone. Mary's was not stone, but she commanded herself very well, though her face flushed in warm sympathy.

“There!—you know it all! I didn't want him to suffer. I knew instinctively, before he went away, he would have spoken; but I was quite defenceless to-day.”

“You have done right, Kate,” said Mary, gently. “He will acknowledge it.”

“Oh, he will not! I am distracted when I think of him! So noble and so far above other men, as he is, it seems terrible that I, who of all others would save him pain, must inflict it.”

“If things were——” commenced Mary, thoughtfully. “If it were possible, you would not let considerations for yourself hinder you——”

“For myself! I have no self; I am all his—his entirely. I can only save him by being cruel. Was there ever selfishness in love?”

“There is a great deal more of that than



of anything else in what is often called love,” said Mary, cynically. “You, in your perfect abandonment of feeling, deify the thing you love. Yours is an unfortunate temperament, as we are placed. Don’t think I cannot feel for you, although I appear tame and cold. I am quite sensible that you must suffer more from your very nature than I could.”

Kate had spoken with flashing eyes, flushed cheeks, and impetuous thrilling voice. She was a grand picture, standing there scorning herself, her self-abandonment, her sorrow, and placing him, Vivian, first in her consideration.

Those tender words of Mary’s cooled the passionate girl. She burst into tears, and sank down upon the hearthrug, burying her face on Mary’s knee.

Mary stroked her hair without a word, and let the girl’s broken sobs fill the pause.

“I dare say, now, it’s a very unusual thing to give way to my feelings as I have done,”

she said, when she arose with swollen eyelids and hair out of order. "I should have thought it almost immodest if I had heard of a woman saying—such things. Although, Heaven knows, it cannot be worse to say them than to feel them. And, notwithstanding all my unutterably painful knowledge, I cannot find anything in the thing itself but that which is beautiful and sacred."

"And so it is, and must ever be. There is no holier, no higher, no greater feeling than love in the whole range of human capacity. We must do without this, except in the universal sense. It need not make us despise other heights, other joys. Why, even the poets themselves depreciate love sometimes. In their efforts to show it great, they fall on the other side, and lower the power by its own force. Honour, it is frequently said, stands superior to love—directs it—guides it. Why, love is the very soul, the essence, of honour itself. 'Love

does all that's noble here below.' Love is the parent of 'honour' and of all things good."

Kate gazed at her sister in wonderment.

"Are you surprised that I should ever have thought on anything but insects? I don't know why people should despise them; they have taught me a great deal."

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE COLONEL IS FOUND OUT.

THE crisis was past. Against all expectation, almost against the fell decree of science itself, Adelaide slowly recovered.

“My dear sir,” said Parke to Bathurst, “nothing less than a magnificent constitution could have sustained the trial. I never expected she would survive. I had no hope; I admit it.”

The colonel still continued to send flowers and books, or anything he could suggest, for the comfort of the ladies; but he did not do that which he should have done—which he knew he should have done—he did not leave Grimslade. He told himself that he had actually conceived a liking for the dingy

old town. The nurse had told him that great doubts had been expressed concerning the luxuries they enjoyed. She had cleverly managed to let it be understood tacitly that the gifts were sent to her.

“Mrs. Elmore looked incredulous at me this morning, when she noted the name of the principal florist here. But then, she believes in me—what a wicked woman I am !”

“Very — very,” acquiesced Bathurst, readily.

She went on to say that both ladies had constantly expressed surprise at the great attention Doctor Parke had shown them.

Yes ; at all this he felt satisfied. He had been able to interpose at the right moment, and his work had not been in vain.

One morning the sun shone quite brightly, and made the principal street positively gay ; people were naturally induced to go out in such exceptional weather. Bathurst stepped serenely out of a cigar shop on to

the pavement, and found himself face to face with Mrs. Elmore. There was no time for preparation. He had only just time to hold his breath. Their eyes met, she gave a visible start, and he began to twirl his moustache vigorously.

“ Ah !—Dear me ! Who would have thought—— ” The tone of surprise was well assumed, but here the colonel paused ; he could not utter another word with those very serious eyes raised to his. “ Oh, I can’t do it ! ” he went on. “ The mischief’s out—you know it now.” And the colour mounted in his fine brown complexion, while he spoke half earnestly, half playfully.

She smiled too. She could not help it ; his confusion was too manifest.

“ Never mind,” she said, as they shook hands. “ I am glad you cannot deceive me to my face, though you have undoubtedly done so behind my back. Oh, don’t protest ! It’s no use—I see through it all ! I have to thank you for everything.”



He shook his head deprecatingly.

"It is quite useless to deny it! *You* are nurse's singularly generous friend. And I was just arranging—credulous and foolish as I am—to give her a really valuable present, by which she might remember——"

"Oh! she deserves it—she deserves it!" he broke in warmly.

"She shall have it. But *you*, colonel— Oh! you ought to be ashamed of yourself to bribe one foolish woman to deceive another. And there's no credit in it—any one can do that."

But the pleasant tone of raillery died out of her voice as she said the last words. "Any one can do that," she repeated, sadly.

"Come, come, my dear Mrs. Elmore, you must not speak like that. I'm sure you can't half guess the trouble I've had to hide myself. You can never have been in disgrace enough to hide from any one."

"Oh, colonel!" she said, after a pause,

and in quite a solemn voice, "I ought to feel *only* thankful—and I *am* thankful. But —*but I am afraid.*"

He drew her hand gently within his arm as he said, "Can't you believe in pure disinterested friendship, Mrs. Elmore?"

Again she paused. Then, looking round at him, she said warmly, "Colonel Bathurst, can you conscientiously look in my face and tell me that disinterested friendship alone brought you here?"

Bathurst was going to make the attempt.

"It was *purely* and *simply* disinterested——"

"Go on," she said, ironically.

"Love, then," he said, boldly finishing the sentence.

"Disinterested love! There's no such thing in a man."

He shook his head innocently; he almost appeared to agree with her.

"I implore you, for your own sake, colonel, to desist," she went on, in agitated tones.

“You must have known—I am sure you must know—it is no foolish whim that keeps me and my daughters in seclusion. I cannot bear to talk upon the subject. And—and my respect and esteem for you are so great that I cannot allow you to deceive yourself.”

“You would not do so—and I have not done so,” he replied, gravely. “I knew there was a bar before I came here. I am as fully convinced of it now. My feeling for your daughter may not be what you call disinterested, but I am ready to do fifty times more than I have done for her—or hers—without a hope of reward.”

“Oh! how sorry—how grieved I am—this should have fallen on you! Forgive my doubt? Love seldom comes up to your standard. But, believe in you as I might, it is only right you should not meet Adelaide.”

“Do not say so, Mrs. Elmore! She does not know it—she *never* shall know it. I

am not a headstrong boy, and she—she is a very exceptional woman. Is friendship to be denied us because there must not be love? I can keep my secret. And, trained as she has been, she will, of course, never think of—of such thing.”

Here a severe stab of the conscience warned him that he was transgressing.

“The—the moderate acquaintance there could be allowed under our circumstances would scarcely satisfy the demand, even of friendship. It seems hard to tell you, after all your goodness, that friendship would be better left alone. Let me know, colonel, for how much we are indebted to you. Flowers and fruits and jellies we will concede, but I cannot allow—anything more. I noticed—that is, I really thought that Doctor Parke’s charges were inadequate to his rank. Men of his kind are generally satisfied with one or two visits. And I never quite understood the manner in which he appeared upon the scene. I can’t allow

any interference on that point—I can't submit to the obligation, even from you, Colonel Bathurst."

"Now, I solemnly declare," he protested; but Fate decreed that he should get no farther in that sentence, for just then an old woman, decently but very poorly dressed, stood before them.

She was a very small dark woman, with bright intelligent eyes, and as they rested on the fine martial figure of the colonel, they kindled almost as a mother's might when she looks on a noble son.

She made a rapid movement forward. Mrs. Elmore, who was watching her with some interest, in spite of her own state of mind, saw that the movement was unpremeditated—indeed, half unconscious.

"Are you—are you Lieutenant Bathurst?" said the old woman, in a quick breathless way.

He stopped and looked down upon her with his usual gentle cordiality. Mrs. Elmore moved a little aside.



“I am that man—but some years older than the lieutenant was.”

Then the dark bird-like eyes filled up suddenly with tears.

“Then—then you’ve forgotten Kitty, Master Harold.”

“What !—Kitty ? ”

He took both thin, ungloved hands in his, while he looked steadily at her.

“What ? Kitty, my little mother ! never to be forgotten.”

And then he stooped low—and he had to stoop very low before he could reach his old nurse’s face, with his bearded lips.

Mrs. Elmore’s eyes were as wet as Kitty’s ; she could understand it all. This unexpected action of his, his utter disregard of on-lookers, touched her deeply. Ah ! he was a man to love ; he was a man to adore.

The next words she heard were, “I must know how we lost sight of you, Kitty. My mother tried very hard to find you. Why did you keep away ? Surely you



knew where to find some of the family ? There always has been Netherby."

But the affectionate old woman was quite unable to give coherent replies ; she was overwhelmed.

"I'm not going to let you escape now ! I want your address, and I'm coming to see you ; so that's all about it. You never could say 'no' to me, you know."

Suddenly waking to a sense of the dreadful impropriety of things, and the quiet lady looking on, Kitty, with a hurried apology, wiped her tearful, happy face, and, having given the necessary address, went on her way.

"Well ! I'm very glad of that," said Bathurst, as they walked on. "Poor old soul ! She looks as though she wouldn't be the worse for a friend."

But Mrs. Elmore was silent.

"I have not seen her for nearly twenty years, and I wonder that she knew me. I knew her, though, directly I caught the

expression in her face. That bright little woman is one of my first memories. She cared for me as my mother could not at that time."

Still his companion did not speak. He noticed her silence now.

"Mrs. Elmore, I feel as if I ought to apologize to you, but really I forgot everything but Kitty."

"Colonel Bathurst," said Mrs. Elmore, in quiet, well-regulated tones, "everything that you do, and everything that you say, can only redound to your honour."

END OF VOL. II.







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